



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A Chinese Story Teller.



W. REMFRY HUNT.

CH 24/1.5

To the Rev. Mr. [unclear] D.D.
of the
First-Christion Church [unclear]
Compliments from
Will G. Weston.



HARVARD
COLLE
LIBRA

1
50



SHI KWEI PIAO,
The Chinese Story-Teller.

A Chinese Story-Teller Or the Changed Story

BY

WM. REMFRY HUNT
(Foreign Christian Missionary Society)
Author of "Facts About China,"

WITH FOREWORD BY

W. P. BENTLEY, M. A.

ILLUSTRATED

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
St. Louis, Mo.

Ch 249.80

✓

*Copyright, 1903, by
Christian Publishing Company*



046 *304

TO
DR. W. T. MOORE, M. A., LL. D.,
FROM WHOM I FIRST LEARNED TO INTERPRET THE
STORY OF THE CHRIST,
IS THIS SMALL WORK DEDICATED.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SHI KWEI PIAO, THE CHINESE STORY-TELLER

Frontispiece

	FACING PAGE
AN OFFICIAL PROCESSION	34
THE STORY-TELLER	48
BOAT TRAVEL	58
CHINESE WOMEN	64
A CHINESE STREET SCENE	64
PERSECUTING THE CHURCH	72
AN AFTER-DINNER NAP	80
GRAND CHINESE TEA-HOUSE	80
THE SORROWS OF OPIUM	88
BREAKING THE OPIUM HABIT BY PRAYER	94
THE TRAVELING SHOEMAKER	103
BROUGHT BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE	116
MRS. SHI AND "LITTLE LOVE"	122
BUILDING A VILLAGE CHURCH	130
TEACHING IN HIS VILLAGE HOME	140
PROCLAIMING THE NEW STORY	154

CONTENTS

Foreword	11
Introduction	17

CHAPTER I

Birth and Ancestry—Parentage—Environment—Education	27
--	----

CHAPTER II

Rebellion—Peace—In Perils—Discipline—A Prodigal—Sagacity	38
--	----

CHAPTER III

Learning his Story—An Inn-Keeper—Native Eloquence Graduates into a Story-Teller—His First Story	46
---	----

CHAPTER IV

The Beggar King and the Slave Girl Empress—The Taiping Wang—The Three Rivals—How are the Mighty Fallen—The Sorceress	51
--	----

CHAPTER V

Slavery to Habit—Pleasures of Opium—Sorrows of Opium	75
--	----

CHAPTER VI

His Idea of Jesus—Meets a Man—The New Religion—His Story Changing—Sick—Awakening—Wandering	80
--	----

CHAPTER VII

- At Yu Ho Tsz—In Nanking—Poverty—The Victory—
Among Old Friends—The Dawn of Day . . . 88

CHAPTER VIII

- The New Story—A Chinese Sermon—Chinese Audi-
ences with Chen Loh Suen—A Native Christian . . . 98

CHAPTER IX

- A Plot—A Marriage—Land Purchase—Animosities—
Before a Heathen Tribunal—Take no Thought
What Ye Shall Say—Spiritual Blessing . . . 106

CHAPTER X

- The Adoption of Aitsz—A Child of Love—Native
Evangelist—Rehearsal of Story-Telling . . . 119

CHAPTER XI

- Death of Colleagues—Builds a Church—A Miniature
Farm Colony—Among the Poor—A Pathetic Scene 127

CHAPTER XII

- The City Church—Dark Clouds—Times of Refreshing 135

CHAPTER XIII

- The "Boxer" Rebellion—Are the Missionaries to
Blame?—The Breakup of Heathenism—The Out-
look for the New Century 141

CHAPTER XIV

- Chinese Village Preaching—The Type of the Native
Preacher—Methods and Agencies of Gospel Story-
Telling 149

A CHINESE STORY-TELLER.

FOREWORD.

“THE proper study of mankind is man.”
This remains true even when the man is yellow.

Altruism, too, is making progress in the world, albeit her pace seems slow. There is a world-spirit abroad among men—a feeling of kinship, and consequently of interest. Even the world-interest of trade or science exhorts us to increase of knowledge and intercourse. What shall we say, then, of our interest in man—any man, anywhere—when we behold in him not a prospective customer or a scientific subject, but a *man*—body and soul and spirit—to be transformed into an heir of incorruptible glory?

Undoubtedly the best means of obtaining a satisfactory acquaintance with a people is by residing in the country or by extensively traveling in it. But to the vast majority this is impossible. Very well, then. Let us have books. Ever since Marco Polo “drew the long bow” before his astonished Venetian friends, China has been a magnet for writers, travelers and traders, and last and best, for Christian teach-

Foreword

ers. The catalogue of works on subjects pertaining to China makes a closely-printed volume half as large as Webster's Dictionary. But most of these are obsolete or inaccessible. New works appear each year. They are needed. China is an inexhaustible mine. Through ages she has well guarded the Delphic Oracles of her own mysteries. And now, the glinting rays of the new century's rising sun are but reflected back from the Oriental's millenniums-old thought-proof armor, to blind the vision of the eager observer.

But progress is a skillful archer, and has already found some joints in the armor. Even after the "opium" war China was largely a terra incognita, and remained almost as a sealed book until the treaty of Nankin.

To some, an awakened China is fraught with danger to the rest of the world. Anything great and dimly known is likely to excite fear. So the "Yellow Terror" is the legitimate child of the "Yellow Mystery."

It is to be hoped that it will not require another hundred years for us to discover that the Chinaman is not a monster, "half devil and half man." 'Tis true that

Foreword

"East is east and west is west,"

but when two strong men meet on the plane of mutual consideration and concession, then each in his heart shall discover much kindly feeling for the other, and each for the other speaks often phrases of commendation and respect.

The contact of two opposite civilizations produces, inevitably, much friction. Tien-tsin massacres, Yang-tse Valley riots and Boxer risings mark the detonating points. The hopeful thing about it is that the friction gradually lessens.

But, you say, the Chinaman is a mystery, a puzzle, a riddle. But that is always true of "other" people, until,—yes, until—you *know* them. Ah! that is the secret. We have not *got to* the Chinaman yet.

The results obtained by an astigmatic eye through a telescope plus a smoked glass, would not likely be noted for accuracy. But considering prejudice, distance and difficulties, such are about the impressions many of us have of the denizens of the Middle Kingdom. Their physiognomical characteristic which marks them as "almond-eyed" pertains only to the upper eye *lid*. The moral of which is that those things

Foreword

in each other (for we are the "foreign devils" to him) which most astonish or offend are very likely but skin deep.

The seat of the trouble is in that hereditary suspicion which is native to man, and which is a relic of the time when to our ancestors every one not of the same tribe was counted an enemy. And the man who by a jot abates this mutual ignorance is a benefactor of the race. (I hereby pronounce the author of this book to be such a one.) How tenacious is prejudice! How slowly we realize the dream of brotherhood! But it grows apace. Invention annihilates space. Illusions vanish before association. A pound of tea shall make two men friends—the buyer and the seller. One grain of knowledge cements friendship—between the teacher and the taught. Ah! well. We shall know each other by and by—then we shall understand. The aim of the author is just this—to give the reader a pen-picture of the Chinaman in some of the everyday aspects of his life, and this all the more effectively by taking the actual experiences of a real hero.

That is an interesting evolution of the "Story-Teller" himself from the time when he

Foreword

entertained his audiences with accounts of native heroes, goblins or fictitious characters, to his later years, when, with heavenly fire transfusing his native grace and power, he swayed hundreds with the old, old story, "The Sweetest Story Ever Told."

We are ourselves acquainted with the "Story-Teller," and without a twinge of conscience vouch for his modesty, ability and sterling character, and have read with delight his stories, "The Three Rivals," "The Sorceress," and—but the pleasant secrets of the succeeding pages must not be revealed here.

You will likely feel that you do know at least one Chinaman by the time you have finished the book. You can well postpone making the acquaintance of the rest of the four hundred millions until some future time. You have at least made a start in the path of duty, and, let us hope, of pleasure.

W. P. BENTLEY.

Shanghai, China.

INTRODUCTION.

A CHINESE story-teller in other lands than the Orient would remind the audience of the quaint, peculiar, and grotesque sketches which adorn our old-time dinner services and teacups, as he assisted the imagination to grasp the weird, fairylike, droll, comical, and yet artistic, picture of Chinese life in the villages and homes, towns and cities of the million-peopled Middle Kingdom.

The illustration would be a sort of first impression of the new and old, rare and commonplace, wonderful and spectacular scenes, which adorn the habits, manners and customs of the yellow man in his own empire.

No picture would, however, be true to Chinese life and scenery if it did not portray its tea gardens and temples, minarets and pagodas, marble arched rivers and beautiful lakes, gilded palaces, Mongolian sculpture of ancestral tombs, with all its extensive and ornamental parks, fountains, pleasure grounds, theaters and menageries. These, too, be it remembered, are to be closely associated with the immense

Introduction

empire of provinces, cities, plains, forests, hills and valleys which are spread in every altitude from the sea level to the snow line.

The great commercial centers and districts are dotted with gorgeous cities encircled with grim grey walls, and densely populated towns possessing every variety of industry, volume of arts and multiple products. The charming scenic effect is beautified with the grandeur of high mountains and pretty waterfalls decorated and framed with foliage peculiar to its native air. It is an eye-relief to note the natural mapping out of the well irrigated lands, covering country opulent in the production of wheat, rice, rye, barley, maize, millet, tea, corn, tobacco, indigo, opium and vegetables *ad infinitum*. These are served with every degree of climate and all varieties of rude and elementary facilities for native transportation.

This age-eaten empire is the marvel of the centuries. Like a hoary Colossus she lifts her head over the graveyards of the nations. To her we are as but of yesterday. Nor does the Chinese claim to antiquity seem unjust when it is considered that her historians record that the Middle Kingdom watched the rise and fall of

Introduction

Macedon, Egypt, Rome, Greece, Assyria, Babylon, Elam, Persia and Judea. Her institutions, literature, laws, government, ethics, traditions, religions and ideas are age-stamped and custom-sealed.

China is the antiquated chronometer of the fabulous ages, on the dial plate of whose history is ascribed to Celestial genius the discovery of gunpowder, printing, paper, ink, compass, engraving and pottery. China, however, crystallized rather than utilized her discoveries.

The Chinese literature will not yield the palm in its claim to priority to the learning of the Egyptians or the School of Thebes. The "Yih King," China's oldest record, was already ancient when the Vedic classics of Indian philosophy and the teaching of the Zend Avesta of the Persian schools were first born into the ethics of the times. When the children of Israel under Moses came out of Egypt, and when Abraham heard the call of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, the Chinese were a great nation. They possessed a high form of civilization, had legends and traditions which go a long way to witness to her earliest monotheistic ideas in religious science.

Introduction

Tracing the facts and forces which moved and shaped the religious consciousness of mankind, we find the Chinese earliest in the field of all the arts and literatures. She antedates the priesthood and astrology of the Babylonians, the mythologies of Mesopotamia and Egypt, while the palmy history of the Hindoo *avatars* in its incarnate divinities, together with the heroes of Homer and Plato, the Delphic oracle, the Tripitakas of Buddhism, are regarded by her scholars and writers as modern western stories; and, living in the poetic interpretation of the dead past, has little or no interest in the prosaic realities of the living present.

Chinese commentators and authors, some five thousand years since, were writing essays and composing odes which are to-day sung and recited in a million schools and hamlets of the poor literary, wisdom-loving people of the country. In spite, however, of the fact that other younger nations have advanced and left China lost in the rear guard of progress, she remains proud, haughty, unchanged and uninfluenced. From the Dragon throne she stands like the eternal hills and views the seed-time and harvest of a thousand ages in the valleys

Introduction

and plains of the world's fields below.

The Chinese mind is as mysterious as is Chinese history. Both are clouded in obscurity and equally as difficult of analysis. Vague, proud, ignorant, contradictory, exclusive, egotistic, cold, lacking sympathy and soul-life, the average Celestial possesses little chivalry or patriotism. He is religious because it is custom. He is a physical, mental and social riddle. With his yellow skin, high cheekbones, broad flat nose, flat face, oblique eyes and vacant expression, together with the sameness of facial outline to the millions of those around about him, the monotony of his presence is at once apparent. Even in traits of character and the use of the senses and general uses of the common faculties there is the divergence of the poles. Diametrically opposite in ideals, the Mongolian has little kinship or common feeling with the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic races or even with his Hindoo neighbors or early Persian visitors. He is a distinct type of the race—even if he be of one origin with the rest of the human family—possessing peculiarities which almost prove his being molded in other ages, among some uni-

Introduction

versal races of mankind in a distinct, solitary and unique environment.

Chinese streets and market places exhibit the ever-restless and never-changing repetition of its human activities. It is in the cities that the life-throb of the nation's great arteries is felt and witnessed. Through the narrow, stone paved and bamboo covered streets, from sunrise to sunset, pour the rushing, pushing, crowding, yelling masses of almond-eyed, pig-tailed, gaily dressed and poorly clad Celestials.

In the pandemonium of the yellow emporium and marts are to be seen donkeys, camels, wheelbarrows, water buffaloes, pigs, goats, sedan chairs, coolies, mandarins, beggars, students, court scribes, silk-clad merchants, as well as the opium-eating, emaciated Chinese who line the streets. On these streets you may see the frugal country salesman counting his heavy brass cash, stringing them on grass cords, and putting them safely in his monster belt purse. The small-footed, crippled, toddling women and girls limp along over the greasy pavements, oftentimes the mother having her baby tied around her back with long, loose cloths.

Introduction

Every conceivable commodity is openly exposed for sale. Few shops have either windows or doors. In every shop and at every counter is to be seen a whole school of apprentices. Tinkers, watchmakers, opticians, dentists, surgeons, bakers, barbers, massage experts, hatters, fortune-tellers and others cry their wares amid the clanging cymbals of the theater and tea saloon, and add to the din and confusion of the streets.

The Chinese story-teller is also a man of the streets. He is one of its prominent and most appreciated figures. He is a deep and subtle student of classic lore and folk lore as well as of human nature. Little escapes his keen vision. He reads the living acts of present life as well as the stories of the heroes and heroines. The Yamen Secretary and common coolie will together stop and listen to the profuse and winsome rhetoric of the story-teller. On bridges, by market places, in opium or tea saloons, the ubiquitous story-teller is to be found. It is his eloquence, ease and art of wit and wisdom which make him welcome anywhere and everywhere.

"A verse may find him who a sermon flies."

Introduction

Into these simple and yet wonderfully interesting stories and recitations of events, both real and fictitious, whether in prose or in verse, are interwoven their loves, their hates, their joys, their sorrows, their hopes and their ideals. Someone has said, "The proverbs of a people are the index of their religion." It is equally true that the biographies of its worthies and heroes, as told in semi-dramatic story every day in some of its seventeen hundred walled cities, are the portraiture of its life and character.

It is to the credit of the Chinese that, although only a mere fraction of its four hundred millions can either read or write, yet, through these orators of the streets, with their scenic performances and farcical comic operettas, it is made possible for a large proportion of even the common people to become intelligently familiar with the literature, songs and history of the Empire.

It was in such a life-school that the storyteller of whose life and story this little book is a narrative was trained and molded. It is an attestation to the fact, that when God chooses a man for a special work he gives him a special equipment. Thus was *Shi Kwei Piao*

Introduction

chosen to be the herald of a newer story, in which capacity he has proved himself one of China's ablest preachers of the Cross.

A CHINESE STORY-TELLER

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND BIRTH—PARENTAGE—ENVIRONMENT
—EDUCATION.

SHI KWEI PIAO, like other men, inherited much from his ancestry. The sanctity of lineage is the most cherished idol of the yellow race. The child, not only of his parents, but also of his environment, he represented the peculiar traits of Mongolian life and character. In the birth, growth, youth and manhood of Shi Kwei Piao are to be traced those features which impressed the times. It was the 25th year of the reign of Tao Kwan of the present Tsing dynasty (pure era), when in a rural farmhouse, near Forty Li bridge, a mountain town in the northeast of Anhwei province, Shi Kwei Piao was born. The date corresponds in our chronology to the year 1845. This period in China, however, does not represent the dawn of the twentieth century. Rather does it depict the darkest watch of the Asian night prior to the rising of His star in the east.

A Chinese Story-Teller

In the rustic associations of an agricultural life in Sinim there is much which contributes to that fantastic, meditative, philosophic and illusive frame of mind which culminates in belief in astrology, alchemy, and other phenomena of the simpler ages. It was from his father and mother, therefore, our hero would learn the *et cetera* of the trinity of superstitions as illustrated in the traditions of Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist teaching.

The old house with its mud walls and thatched roof and hardened mud floors would hardly compare with our barns in style and equipment; yet it was "home, sweet home." Theirs was a sturdy, free, bold and hardy life. Wants were simple, needs few, and aspirations rare. Self-initiative and independence were free and unconstrained. The stillness and calm of the village life would be broken by an occasional robber raid, a feast day, an idol procession, and a festive market day. Sometimes a trip with the gathered grain to the city would afford a chance to see the novel sights of town and hear the latest news from the capital.

Some of Shi Kwei Piao's relatives were *village elders*, or "headmen," as they are some-

A Chinese Story-Teller

times called. These men act as the local police and have considerable influence in both arranging and settling disputes, legal troubles, taxation, robberies, wedding, funeral and idolatrous processions. Their functions extend over a wide area, and they are looked upon as being the peacemakers of multiple family fueds and harvest-time bickerings as to the amount of taxation and the very important collection of the same. In and around the ancestral homes, with their customs, decorum and worship, are to be traced those habits which make up the indigenous qualities of exclusion, arrogance, the ejection and rejection of all exogenous influences of expansion and advancement as urged by the "sea-border pink barbarians" of other climes.

The natural pride of descent, race, kindred, clan and country is as much oriental as it is occidental. It is not surprising, therefore, that Shi Kwei Piao should often speak of his "Ku shiang" (village home) and his ancestry, as both illustrious and otherwise. Their sympathies, Chinese-like, narrow down to a stronger alliance with kin than of kind. Shi's great-grandfather was of the literary class and enjoyed distinction in the dignity of an official

A Chinese Story-Teller

position. He was a "hsien" (sub-division city) magistrate in the province of Yuin-nan (the cloudy south).

His adopted son, whom he called his nephew, was serving this official in the yamen, and having no wife, the official's kindness and consideration went out to him. From his own court he selected a native girl servant and gave her to wife to the nephew. The nephew and wife became unfilial and ran away from the restraints of home. They traveled far northwest across Kwei Chow, Hunan, Kiangsi provinces and on to Anhuei, and finally settled in Shu ee hsien district at a little town called Forty Li bridge.

Shi's father came of this stock. He was born during their migration in Tung Chen, a city in Anhuei province. He had married a slave girl from the agricultural classes of the Tao Yuen district in Kiangsu province. A succession of bad harvests had impoverished the region and caused the family to trek northward until they reached the wheat-producing districts of Anhuei. The land was cheaper there and the conditions of living a little easier than in the manufacturing cities of the south.

It was in the hilly country near Shu ee hsien

A Chinese Story-Teller

that the spot was chosen for a farm. The name "Forty Li bridge" was given to the place because it was situated forty Chinese miles from the town. Here the children grew up in simple, clan-like bands. In the villages were to be seen the massive water buffalo, dragging rude, wheel-less carts laden with grain as a rest from ploughing. There were to be seen the one-handled plough, the women grinding at the mill, the night watchman, the happy boys and girls going out at night with lamps trimmed to the marriage feast, the traveling physician, the mendicant priests, the theatre, the baby tower, the idol temple, the market place, the "pai loh," an engraven archway erected in praise of some virtuous widow who committed suicide in order to follow her husband to the unseen world. These are some of the sidelights which illuminate Chinese village life.

The central provinces possess alike a rude civilization, wild beauty, barren prairies, marshy and malarial lowlands, high plateaus and rich verdure, well-fed water courses, and rugged, rocky scenery. Beautiful in their spring dress, they are cold and dead in their winter garb. To know Chinese village life is an education. The

A Chinese Story-Teller

faint rising blue funnel of smoke around each thatched cottage betrays the secret of the busy life and never-wearying industry within. Each hamlet is a miniature universe, and every home a sphere of human activities.

Every village farmhouse has its dogs, which are trained to bark and bite at intervals left to their own instinctive discretion. The Chinese proverb says, "The dogs bite the poorly clad, while they shy at silks and pride." It is most interesting to watch the family groups sitting cosily around the farmyard in the summer evening. The oriental story-teller is sometimes there. Shi doubtless gained much of his wide knowledge of Chinese arts, traditions, song and history, telling of its statesmen, heroes, wars, palace intrigue and bribery, from these golden-mouthed sons of Han.

Shu ee city exercised jurisdiction over a large number of towns and villages adjacent to its grim grey walls and buttresses. This Celestial "Samaria" demonstrated that the moral character of the cities in China, as in western lands, is more susceptible to those vulgarities and corruptions which center around and work out from the yamens or courthouses. Being there-

A Chinese Story-Teller

fore in constant touch with the capital of a province, the city would be in near touch with the life currents of the nation. The monthly, annual and biennial examinations for the literary degree-button would also attract thousands to the city. Not infrequently the military review of the Chinese braves in the archery, horse-riding and weight-lifting competitions would gather whole district populations into the walled emporium. On these special occasions the elite and the members of the four divisions of Chinese society are in evidence, and the scene is a well-rounded picture of a Chinese crowd.

In frequent trips to the city the hardy youth would have a fit occasion to witness some of the more lively scenes of city streets and market places. The oriental courthouse attracted him. Young Shi would go into the magistrate's court and listen to the cases on trial. These would comprise trials for assault, robbery, divorce, fraud, land quarrels, and the hundred and one bickerings in marriage, funeral and other affairs which present the *casus belli* for Chinese litigation.

Chinese courts are open to all. The hearing

A Chinese Story-Teller

and examination go on in public. Silence is kept by yamen runners briskly handling canes, while sometimes a squad of soldiers will parade the courtyard, or are in near call if their martial presence is required.

One of the most artistic of scenes—from a Chinese view point—which one witnesses every few days in a Chinese town or city is the official turn-out of the district mandarin. Borne in a stately sedan chair, the portly official sits like a petrified image. Chinese Pharisaic decorum prescribes that he look neither to the right hand nor to the left. He is preceded by the "Red Umbrella" and a crowd of quaintly dressed men and boys who shout as they half run ahead, "Prepare the way, the great man comes." Secretaries on horseback and military underlings escort the dignified magistrate, and behind the official chair is the usual run of scores of street Arabs, each carrying a pole with a gilded hieroglyphic attached, signifying rank, position, etc. These scenes impress the crowds and warn evil-doers.

Shi Kwei Piao had very little schooling, and what he did have was not education. He was initiated at eleven years of age into a country

A Chinese Story-Teller

schoolhouse where the pedagogue was an old opium-eater. This man taught characters, that is, Chinese hieroglyphics; smoked his Turkish pipe and sipped his green tea, slept over his desk, used the rod, maintained a serious dignity, and taught the rudiments of the philosophy of Confucius. Shi's "education" extended over a period of half a year, and that might not even have been so but for the fact that a famine prevented him from following his forced occupation of a shepherd boy and farm laborer's assistant. Like the son of David, the Chinese sage believed that "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions." In the initial sentence of the first Chinese textbook, the "Trimetrical Classic," are the words: "At birth men are by nature radically good; in their natures they approximate, but in practice differ widely." Chinese education lacks system, variety and adaptability, and as such is defective and faulty in its own environment.

Six months elapsed when the bright, sturdy and good-natured boy had to quit school for farming. He was then about twelve years of age. He says of those days he was a good

A Chinese Story-Teller

joker, a bright story-teller and an indifferent student. Those who knew him best saw there was a genuine character in him which seemed to rise above that of his class and environment, and which had yet to assume shape in its rightful mold and set in its own native atmosphere. Proof of this was not wanting in the confidence his boy companions placed in him. He was straight, strong and true, and never betrayed a trust. Brave and reckless, yet he was gifted with good judgment at the right moment; and these qualities made him a good leader as well as a true friend.

The discipline of life on a farm would be invaluable at any time and in any place, and almost under any circumstances. Early in life Shi learned to clear the ground, fell trees, raise corn, wheat, barley, rice, maize, indigo, opium and the general list of the local products. Sometimes the farm laborers left their homes and went across the plains with spear as well as hoe. Bands of banditti were pillaging the country. Every village and hamlet was a sentry guard, and every threshing-floor a camping ground.

This was enough to sharpen any of the

A Chinese Story-Teller

senses. It fostered independence. Nor was this all. The keen struggle for existence, the unjust laws, the tyranny of illegal taxation, the terrors of officialdom and unfavorable conditions of life in a heathen land, the consequent lack of home training, the rough and ready existence, the social disorder and national and political confusion—all these things seemed to combine to prepare the youth for much physical and moral endurance.

Although brought up in a heathen home, Shi had the advantages which come to those who are forced to self-reliance. With a poor but honest parentage, the boy had from his earliest days been a child of labor. At six years of age he was the fuel-gatherer from the hills; and on through his youth became a fine judge of cattle. In the building of the rude, mud-walled, grass-thatched native buildings Shi excelled as a quick and ingenious workman, his length of arm and willingness to lend a hand anywhere making him always a welcome servant.

CHAPTER II

REBELLION—PEACE—IN PERILS—DISCIPLINE—
A PRODIGAL—SAGACITY.

IT was in the year 1856 that the ravages of the Taiping rebellion began to lay waste the southern and central provinces. Nankin had been held as the capital of the rebel forces since 1853. The air was charged with evil omens. A comet appeared, and the sorcerers and dream expounders, together with the native alchemists, saw in the portent an evil indication of blood and fire. Soon the rumbling rumors broke into open flame. The armies of the "Heavenly King" (Hong Sen Tswein was known by the rebel chiefs as Tien Wan, or the "Heavenly King;" he was the leader of the Taiping rebellion) were seen with their banners over the hilltops of Anhuei province. Cities were plundered, temples destroyed, towns wrecked, disorder reigned and government was in chaos. The insurrectionary devastation laid waste the fairest and richest food-producing districts, with the awful result of famine and the pestilence and anarchy which followed in its train.

A Chinese Story-Teller

The fate and fortunes of the empire were at stake. It was a fanatical religio-political revolution. The chief design was to dethrone Buddhism and in the place of it to establish a semi-Christian state. The upheaval was tremendous, the benefits nil. In six months these insurgent forces had traversed four provinces, taken twenty-six cities, subsisted on the enemy and defeated every body of Imperialists sent against them. The decree of the "Heavenly King" was submission or death. Like the slaying armies of Mohammed, its fanaticism made havoc of every city it touched, and gathered to itself the scum of the empire. It ended in ruin. Whatever the Taiping rebellion may have done in shaking the faith of the masses in idolatry, it heaped upon its own spent force the demonstration of a miserable failure to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. Its irremediable failure shows the scope and limitations of partial and ethnic ideas in religious science, and announces once again in history that religion cannot be forced on a people by the sword.

With the inauguration of peace came the restitution of law and order. For ten years the whole country had been in a reign of terror.

A Chinese Story-Teller

The ravage caused was almost irreparable. Like thousands of his fellow countrymen Shi had taken to the nomadic form of life. On the return of hundreds of the scattered remnants of families, lands had to be reclaimed because the properties had been demolished. Traces were almost entirely lost of some towns and villages. The country was infested with wolves, hyenas, jackals, and other wild beasts.

"It was a barren, desolate scene,
Grim and grey, with scarce a tree."

Shi related an interesting and exciting experience while he walked from Tau Yuen to Ku Cheng during the closing days of the rebellion, when he called at an old friend's home. The story runs thus: The old man had a granary stacked with corn. Several pigs were also snorting around. Those were days of want. The snow lay thick on the ground. At the urgent request of the old man, Shi consented to stay and watch the house while he visited some relatives several *li* away. While he did so, he was to be compensated by being allowed to eat as much of the corn meal as he could grind between two stones. He was also to enjoy the tranquil rest of feeding the swine and keeping

A Chinese Story-Teller

them from the hungry clutches of the voracious wolves. These beasts were attracted by the piles of corpses that were strewn in the pathway of the relentless rebels. Shi relates with humor and eloquence how on several occasions he had most stirring experiences with the hungry and rapacious wolves, as they would howl around in the stillness of the night. They even dared to scratch at the old rattan cane door, which contrivance was scarcely a quarter of an inch thick and which was the only protection from the dangers without. Beside his broken down old bed were spears and clubs, which kept the wolves, to use his own phras-eology, "both real and figurative, between me and the prairie."

In the stern, hard school of service, the discipline of poverty, and the education of life's vivid experiences in city and village, the Chinese youth grew in years and in strength of conviction that he would succeed. It ought not to be surprising that out of such an arena should evolve a man. He was taught from earliest childhood that if a thing was difficult of achievement, that was the reason he was to go at it and master it.

A Chinese Story-Teller

It is certain that Shi was nursed in no silk-lined cradle. His university was the real thing, and not a mere Chinese academical veneer. The external polish and elegance of manner in him was not of the kind which conceals defects. He had lived these formative years in times that tried men's souls. His mother died about this time, when Shi was twenty-two years of age. He said, "Her light went out in darkness. To her had come no knowledge of the heavenly way other than the riot, carnage and destruction she had seen following the banners and armies of the Taiping rebel chief."

To succeed in life under such conditions was to be the master of courage, and the possessor of a persistency of purpose which rose above hardships and reached the goal. Of such stuff true heroes are made, tested and valued. To the evangelist of whom this story is the history, these early scenes and incidents were the deep shadows which adumbrated the sunshine of the life which was to glow in such fervid witnessing in maturer years.

In 1872 began a new chapter in the life of our hero. For several years he had lived in the district of Ku Cheng, a very poor mountain

A Chinese Story-Teller

town situated some forty miles east of Chu Cheo, in Anhuei province. In this town he worked in the capacity of an innkeeper, farm laborer, or anything to which he could put his hand. Soon after this an opportunity was given him to make a journey as courier from Ku Cheng to Nankin, where he spent some time in the great southern capital. During his reckless life at Ku Cheng, several years before, Shi had contracted the opium-smoking habit, and by this time was a confirmed opium-eater. Poverty followed the wasting riot of the gambling hell, bad living and opium dens, and the young man began to be in want. He again went on and traveled as far as Ningkwohfu in southern Anhuei, where he gained his livelihood by wood-cutting, coolie carrying and mending of water gongs. The hilly country of Ningkwohfu afforded profitable opportunities for wood-cutting and grass-gathering from the vales and hills. This was taken to market and sold, to be used as fuel.

On one occasion, when Shi was engaged in cutting the long dry grass on the hills, he threw himself down on the hillside and slumbered off into one of his meditative moods. He

A Chinese Story-Teller

was suddenly aroused and terrified by seeing standing within a few yards of him a full grown and angry Chinese tiger. Here came into play his quick and ready action in emergencies. Shi possessed wonderful self-control. Not a moment was to be lost. With lightning like decision and certainty, he reached out after his spear-like knife, and with the other hand for a stone, and catching hold of his steel struck a few sparks with his flint and ignited his tinder. The wind favored the act and soon a bunch of long grass was in flames. Spreading out his long arms into a circle he lit the tall grass around him, beating down the fire as it roared towards himself. The terrified man-eater disappeared, and soon after it, the hero of the moment also; for he wisely sought the nearest farmhouse in the valley, and there rehearsed his thrilling experiences to the intensely interested household.

How very clearly eastern life and customs illustrate and beautify Bible stories and customs is seen even in this incident. It explains the statement in Matt. 6:30, referring to "the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven." In China, as in Syria

A Chinese Story-Teller

also, it is often necessary for the farmer or wood cutter to take along with him a spear as well as a pruning-hook. Shepherds are often armed with spears and swords. Travelers in China carry with them quite an equipment in bedding, cooking utensils, steel, flint, tinder, and nearly always firearms.

CHAPTER III

LEARNING HIS STORY—AN INNKEEPER—NATIVE ELO-
QUENCE—GRADUATES INTO A STORY-TELLER
—HIS FIRST STORY.

THE oratorical temperment showed itself in Shi at a very early age. From the village teachers in own home, he had learned many native sonnets and much historic lore, of which the Chinese are so proud in their records. The histories, classic literature, proverbs, stories, dramas, songs, and local theatrical displays, all had a magnetic attraction for the young man.

Often, he said, "I would leave the farm and the field and get off into the street and listen for hours together to the fervid eloquence of our Chinese story-tellers." As they told in golden imagery the heroic deeds and glorious achievements in battle, in song, in art, in palace and in the streets and villages of ancient Chinese life, his whole soul burned to be able to relate the same to his companions and the village folks at home.

He was often chided by his passionate father

A Chinese Story-Teller

for what the poor, yet industrious and dignified, parent called "laziness." This definition, however, referred rather to the misinterpretation of his meditations, wanderings and studious nature. He learned characters, that is, Chinese hieroglyphics, by asking others the meaning of the perpendicular and horizontal sign posts which hung up over the village shops or along the native streets of the cities.

Soon came the chance to leave village life and learn more of the toils and fortunes of the crowded cities. It was while thus planning to leave the former occupation that Shi decided to roam awhile in places strange, and accordingly located temporarily in the region of King Hien in southern Anhuei. While in this unsettled state of mind, he managed to secure his living by working sometimes as farm laborer and sometimes as an assistant innkeeper. His genius, industry and cheerfulness were his main credentials, and his skill recommended his re-employment anywhere.

The work of a Chinese innkeeper is simple, yet constant and laborious. In the winter the work is rough and unthankful. Wages are low and tips rare. The work consists of cooking

A Chinese Story-Teller

rice, washing utensils, feeding mules, etc. In the summer the constant stream of travelers and caravans would, with their demands for tea, hot water, opium and a thousand and one other commissions, keep him busy during eighteen hours of the day. It was only in the autumn days that any leisure was afforded. This was while the agricultural folk were busy in the fields gathering in the harvest. These opportunities were seized to improve story-telling and the accumulation of stories. This spare time was also spent in tea shops, frequented by the fascinating *raconteur*, whose stagelike productions had such winsome effect on the young aspirant. It was due in a measure to these associations that Shi developed that rich, creative imagination which made him such a brilliant story-teller, and which was in a richer and higher sense to so well serve his ministry in later years.

Those who are familiar with Lew Wallace's "Prince of India" will find the finest word-picture of the oriental story-teller depicted in natural yet gorgeous imagery, and yet with truly gauged eastern decorum. These stories are made fragrant with the spicy odors of the

A Chinese Story-Teller

tropics and the almost deification of heroes in war, art, literature, religion and politics. Sometimes these stories will be illuminated by quotations from both Hindoo and Chinese classic epics, and in the peculiar display of native eloquence, always electrified with that other language of the eye, expression, voice, manner and grace of eastern gesticulations, the reader may imagine what a charm the story-teller would have for those who understood his eloquence of soul as he breathed his own intense spirit into the message.

In the year 1873, Shi Kwei Piao graduated into a professional story-teller, and told his first story in the streets of King Hien city, Anhwei province. Speaking of this time, he said, with evidently genuine confession, that he felt a little nervous before his large audience under the blue sky, but said he gained confidence as he went on. Every story-teller, like most preachers, has his favorite stories and sermons. Shi did not always wander into the depths of history for his subjects or illustrations, but rather chose them from actual life and fitting opportunities. Being a native of Anhwei province, he perhaps knew more of its history

A Chinese Story-Teller

and associations than other distant places, and acquainting himself with its records, had chosen as his popular story the "Rise of the Bright Dynasty," or, as it is more commonly called, "the Era of the Beggar King and the Slave Girl Empress."

The above is the title of the fact and fiction, history and legend, romance and reality, incidents and illustrations, axioms and morals, which are incorporated into the biography of Chu Tai Tsu and Ma Heu Shih, the Emperor Hung Wu and his Empress—the illustrious founders of the Ming (Bright) Dynasty.

Seated on an improvised *dais*, under a rustic canopy composed of several bamboo sticks and a covering of white cloth—a favorite resort being a bridge on one of the main streets—the story-teller soon gathers his motley audience. Tum! tum! tum! sounds the little pigskin drum, and a few witty remarks by way of introduction. "Chu Tai Tsu, Hung Wu Ming Chao gi Yuen" are the opening words, meaning: "Ruler First High Emperor. The Great Militant. The Story of the Ming Dynasty!" And now follows the story.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGGAR KING AND SLAVE GIRL EMPRESS—THE
TAI PING WAN—THE THREE RIVALS—HOW ARE
THE MIGHTY FALLEN—THE SORCERESS.

IN the records of Chinese history, both legendary and actual, there is no more thrilling and fascinating story than that of the life of Hung Wu, the beggar king of China. He became the celebrated founder of the Ming Dynasty, A. D., 1368-1644. There were sixteen sovereigns of this epoch with an average length of reign of seventeen years. Its duration was two hundred and seventy-six years. In this era, great public works were executed, and engineering skill exhibited in the building of bridges and roads. Reforms, social, religious and political, were also instituted. There was also a renaissance in literature and the arts.

Hung Wu played a great part in the history and action of this era. Born of obscure parentage, in a humble village, in the province of Anhuei, he grew up in the school of rugged independence and had the misfortune to be left an orphan at the age of seventeen. Having

A Chinese Story-Teller

few friends who cared for him, the boy wandered in regions wild for a little while, but finally entered the Buddhist priesthood in a temple called Whang Kioh Si, near Feng Yang Fu in northern Anhuei, and spent several years in this retreat. The Buddhist priest in charge of this monastery was named Kwoh Tsz Hing.

In A. D. 1353, a military commander of the name of Kwoh Tsz Hing, a bitter hater of the Mongol supremacy, raised the standard of revolt in Anhuei province, and attracted to his service the young Buddhist monk. Under Kwoh Tsz Hing, Chu Yuan Chang (Hung Wu) became efficient, daring, brave and able. He studied the military tactics of the time with him, and was given a commandership in the anti-Mongol agitation. Kwoh Tsz Hing carried all before him. The beacon fires were lit on the hills of the empire, and revolution blazed through the provinces. Assuming power, Kwoh Tsz Hing took the title of the prince of Chu Cheo, shortly after which he died. Having confidence in his young students, Kwoh committed the leadership to Chu Yuan Chang, the young aspirant for power, to whom he had given in marriage his little adopted daughter named Ma Heu,

A Chinese Story-Teller

who was a slave girl of Chu Cheo. This match proved to be one of those which, as Mencius said, must have been arranged in heaven. Ma Heu finally became Empress of China, and with her illustrious husband, proved worthy to rank with the most benevolent rulers in the Celestial Empire.

In falling in love with Ma Heu, Chu Yuan Chang is said to have been assisted by the go-between of the Milky Way. As the poet of the Han Dynasty has sung:

“Across the flood quick glances pass as token
That love is there, though not a word is spoken.”

There is a pretty little incident connected with the betrothal and marriage of Hung Wu and his bride. It appears that the kitchen gods, in their ascent to the highest heaven, were reporting the good deeds of the family. Before the throne of the heavenly king, they kneeled. The fan-bearers on either side of the *dais* were bearing fans, one inscribed with a character for “sun” and the other with a character for “moon.” The courtiers and seraphic beings had rebuked the fan-bearers for laughing during the audience of the kitchen gods. At this juncture, the fan-bearers’ titter-

A Chinese Story-Teller

ing got beyond themselves, and falling together the respective characters "sun" and "moon" were seen to be side by side. These two characters when placed together made the hieroglyphic for "Ming," which interpreted and predicted the beginning of a new dynasty, called the Ming or illustrious dynasty.

After his marriage, Hung Wu became famous. The rebellion had broken the back of the Mongol usurpers. The commanding ability displayed by the young leader had raised him to the command of vast armies, with which in 1355 he crossed the Yang-tse river and captured Nankin, where he proclaimed himself Duke of Wu.

Winning such victories and gathering to himself efficient leaders of the people, Hung Wu became the great, strong and just ruler, while he readjusted relations with neighboring kingdoms and secured many industrial advantages for the people. To Hung Wu belongs the honor of establishing the Illustrious Dynasty, and it is in this association that his name is handed down to history, along with that of his gifted wife, as models for the coming generations.

A Chinese Story-Teller

The following poem commemorates the virtues and perpetuates the memory of the last Emperor of the Ming Dynasty:*

THE SUN CLASSIC.

"Great Sun, Illustrious Light; Thou art of all lights the source,

Thou dost control the universe with the four great continents.

"Daily at his appearing, the heavens are flooded with a crimson hue,

From daylight till dark he never ceases in his travels;
But by his rapid motion he is ever overtaking, and making mankind old.

"Though he appear to speed slowly, yet does he not tarry,
He passes by the door of every house though he be lightly esteemed,

And by the unlearned dishonored, and insulted with an inferior name.

"Thus is aroused the anger of the two beings of light,
Who, should they retire behind the mountains,
Would bring death by famine to the people, and distress to all life.

"Without me in the heavens there would be neither day nor night,

Without me on the earth, the harvests would be lacking,
Every god has those who worship him;
But who will worship me the Great Star of Light?"

*Vide "A Peep into a Chinaman's Library," by James Ware.

A Chinese Story-Teller

"On the First of the Second Moon, with true heart repair
to Buddha's Temple,
For those who upon this date burn incense,
And offer devout worship to the Sun, Buddha
Shall remove calamities, shall increase their length of
days,
And secure peace and happiness.

"The Great Sun was born on the nineteenth of the Third
Moon,
When each family should reverently repeat Buddha's
name,
And illuminate with the crimson lantern.

"Those who circulate this, my Classic, shall with their
entire families,
Both old and young, escape the baneful influence of the
malignant stars,
But to those who obstinately refuse to do so,
Lo; the gate of hell before your eyes!

"Buddha says that this, the liturgy of the Illustrious Light,
Of all lights the Buddha,
Is made known to men of merit and virtuous women;
Who, if they repeat it seven times early every morning,
Shall never enter the gate of hell;
But at death shall be born again into a land of purity,
They shall moreover rescue from hades
All their ancestors for seven generations."

HYMN TO THE MOON.

"The Buddha Moon cometh from the east,
Revealing the palaces of heaven and the lowest depths
of hell.

A Chinese Story-Teller

" He has ascended into the empyrean,
Where are the eighty-four thousand Buddhas, ranged on
either side.

" Above their heads are precious coverings of silver and of
gold,
Before their eyes is spread out the world of extreme
suffering,
Their feet rest upon the floating cloudland,
And the Lotus is blossoming throughout the whole earth.

" Better to chant the Moon Classic seven times,
Than to repeat the volume of the 'Solid Diamond
Classic.'

Thus may mankind repay the bounty of Heaven and
Earth,
And also recompense the favors received from parents.

" When the Moon ariseth and shineth throughout the
whole earth,
Reverently chant this sacred volume.

" Thus shall you escape calamities.
All things shall become propitious to you;
To your parents if living shall be added length of days;
And if dead, speedy deliverance shall be vouchsafed."

Hong Sew Tseun was a modern Mohammed.
He was a native of Kwangtung. He came of
the humble literary class. After education in
the village schools and being plucked in his
B. A. examination, he became a wandering
teacher, and utilized his acquired knowledge of

A Chinese Story-Teller

the arts of geomancy, astrology and fortune telling.

In Kwang Si he identified himself with the secret societies, and finally attached himself to a Jesuit missionary, from whom he learned much of his thwarted ideas of religion. This inspired him to dreams and reveries, in which he became deluded that he was a great leader of the people. Most of these ideas came from his reading a tract issued by a teacher of Dr. Morrison, in which the supreme ruler of the universe, called "Shang Ti," was stated to possess universal power.

In 1850 Hong Sew Tsuen raised the standard of rebellion in Kwangtung and gathered from the cities and towns already kindled for revolution large bodies of insurgents. From the river at Hankow he started an expedition of a thousand junks, and made for the southern capital of Nankin. The movement gained momentum with its successes and sustained itself on its abundance of plunder. His vast hosts sacked the cities and laid waste the palaces and homes through Hunan to Hupeh, and on to the banks of the Yang-tse river. Its motto was "Subjection or death," and its aim to destroy the

A Chinese Story-Teller

Tartar *role* and also ancient paganism. Again the beacon fires were lit over the hills of the provinces, and the empire was in the throes of a violent convulsion.

Hong Sew Tsuen assumed to himself the title of the Prince of Peace, claiming also to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. He said during one of his reveries that he was received up into heaven where the great God of the universe personally instructed him. From the eternal throne he was given oaths and documents with a seal and a sword and majesty irresistible. The celestial mother was kind and exceedingly gracious, and the celestial elder brother's wife was virtuous and prudent.

Some of the religious customs of the rebels afford a most interesting psychological study. The whole insurrection was born out of a mental phenomenon.

The religious services were partly associated with military ritual. In their tents the rebels had daily prayers, reading of Scriptures, chanting of songs, and in the school in the wilderness the officers of Hong Sew Tsuen's army mounted the pulpit every seventh day and preached against Tartarism. They also had repetition

A Chinese Story-Teller

of the Ten Commandments, indulged in the singing of the Doxology, had a self-administered form of baptism, and otherwise seemed to have a mixture of militarism and religion in one. Each company chanted a hymn as they sat down to meat, and every seventh day—the seventh day being observed by mistake for the first—his captains preached long sermons in which the possession of an earthly kingdom was made more prominent than the joys of a heavenly paradise. The following is the rebel Doxology as it was sung in the tents:

“We praise thee, O God, our heavenly Father
We praise thee, the Savior of the world,
We praise thee, the Holy Spirit, the Sacred
Intelligence,
We praise thee, the three persons united as
the true Spirit.”

At Nankin Hong Sew Tsuen set up his court, and on the 19th of March, 1853, proclaimed himself the “Heavenly King,” or Tien Wang. On the 30th of June, 1864, Nankin was lost after several years of terrible siege and bloodshed. It was not, however, until the 19th of July, 1864, that the city was taken over by the Imperialists and the cause of the Tai Ping rebellion forever broken. Hong Sew Tsuen

A Chinese Story-Teller

finally committed suicide and his followers were scattered to the winds of heaven.

In the early bamboo records there are to be found some love stories of Chinese literature which, though colored with that vagueness and imagery which adorn celestial romance and tragedy, yet will be seen to have in it much valuable moral teaching. The following is the story of "The Three Rivals:"

In the Middle Kingdom there lived a poor, industrious agricultural family. The region was noted for its wild beauty and romantic history. One of the daughters of a picturesque household was famous for her great beauty and attainments. As is usual in such cases, the maid was early betrothed to a member of a family of another name and locality. Although the *genii* were said to have sealed the contract, which was accompanied by the usual betrothal presents, an evil omen predicted calamity.

The tradition which says marriages are made in heaven records that a go-between, who was first seen on the ice arranging matches with families below, is the indispensable medium. He is an old man who lives in the moon and has a red cord with which he ties the feet of

A Chinese Story-Teller

those he wishes to become man and wife. There is no escape from this fate, and the poet has written of him in "The Thousand Character Classic for Girls:"

"Marriage is not a trifling thing,
The book and the vermilion string;
On ice by moonlight may be seen
The wedded couples' go-between."

In accordance with the beliefs and rites of this ceremony this beautiful young girl was betrothed to a young and clever archer, who was a competitor for military honors. After a time he was removed from his ancestral home to take a position some distance away, and was never heard of again. Losing trace of him, and the girl being of a marriageable age, she was again betrothed to an accomplished young scholar whose praise was in all the schools. In like manner, this young man also was appointed to an office in distant realms. He went beyond the western hills and was counted as gone from her forever. Grieved to think she was twice disappointed, the lovely maiden again sought with her parents for a third betrothal. The scholars of the district said of her:

A Chinese Story-Teller

"In all the regions watered by the skies,
Or Yang-tse-Kiang's current tell me where,
You'd find on sultry plain or mountain snow
Men half so wise or women half so fair."

The third love match was with one who had been attracted to her, and she to him, by their personal knowledge of each other's fame and accomplishments. He was an athlete of a neighboring state and had won distinction in palace and on stage alike. "Surely," said she, "this is my fate. The gods will give me what is truly mine." Soon, however, strange as the fates decided, this third lover also was removed far away by family troubles, and so after weary months of watching by the gates, waiting in the dells, and tears under the moonlight, she sighed that her lot was surely to be cast in the shades.

With weird and plaintive song she said:

"We parted at the gate and cried good-bye,
The sun was setting as I closed my door;
We said, the spring will come again next year,
But he may come no more."

To the surprise and chagrin, the father one day heard that two of the younger men had returned. These rivals coming to the house,

A Chinese Story-Teller

demanded forthwith the hand and heart of the damsel. As she met them at the gate, they saw that her charms had not waned nor had her wit and beauty faded. After much explanation, it was decided to await the guidance of the gods. Before this was accomplished and to the amazement of the party, the third suitor also appeared, and it was here that a happy idea lit up the clouded mind of the family and neighbors.

Said the girl to her father, "Illustrious parent, if you will let me settle it, I know I shall be happy with him whom the stars shall signal to me as my companion. Only let me open the way for the working of the fates. I will give the three gentlemen a test in a love competition."

Said she to the first lover, a brave youth: "I know your talents in archery. I know also that nothing is too hard for you to attempt to win my heart. I am assured also that the test I shall make ought to win for you the fairest of honors. See that flourishing mulberry tree in my father's garden? Go and take with you your finest bow and cleanest arrows and when you have shot every leaf from that tree, and

A Chinese Story-Teller

have come here first in this love competition, then we two shall be made as one."

To the second waiting lover, she said in terms of equal eulogy: "Your literary merit has made you a *rara avis* anyway, and this test will be easy for you, while you are filled with joyous anticipation. Away to your illustrious library," she cried, waving her pointed fingers. "Write me a beautiful, chaste and scholarly essay of ten thousand characters, and should you, as you doubtless will, come here first, we shall be as the doves that mate and as the flowers that live with each other."

To the third trembling, but never-to-be-beaten competitor in love's arena, she said: "Your prowess and strength and swiftness of limb are of world-wide fame. Your ideals have only to be breathed so as to be certain of accomplishment. You know the famous Tai Shan. Wing then your flight, and though its hills are in the clouds, and its access through deepest ravines, and though you may hasten o'er widest rivers or arid plains, such a journey is not inaccessible to him who has the spirit and genius of Fei Pao Tui (a legendary character who tripped over the Himalayas as girls

A Chinese Story-Teller

and boys trip over the stepping-stones of a creek.)

"Go," said she, in the sweetest of song, "and bring unto us the golden bell from the heights of Tai Shan. You know this bell fell from heaven in the centuries that are past, and has never been brought to our plane of earth. Whoever possesses this has happiness complete. It shall be more to us than silks or jade and shall be the music to ring in the joys of our wedded life in yonder ancestral hall."

Oriental effusion is taxed to its widest stretch of imagination to picture the skill, ability and never wearying energies of these three respective competitors in love.

When the ardent little archer appeared after his limb-aching, eye-testing and soul-inspiring work of ridding the mulberry tree of its every leaf, he was met by the beautiful girl in the garden. "Look," she said, "there are yet three small leaves waving in the winds. Go and finish the—"

Before another word could be uttered, the finely dressed scholar had appeared, and with pride born of a consciousness that his writing was the *essay de luxe* in point of composition,

A Chinese Story-Teller

matter and thesis, handed his essay to the modest and smiling maid. But he was almost stunned to hear her hastily tell him to return quickly to his home with the essay and bind it with silk, as it was still unbound and consequently unfit for presentation to her father and the other umpires. At this juncture, he hurried away flushed with hope that the balance would surely turn in his favor.

The illustrious parent, feeling sure that the accomplished scholar would win, asked him to sit down and drink tea with them in the garden, while they talked over the probable arrangements connected with the marriage ceremonies, when to their amazement the lovely bride recited the following couplet:

"Though you drink my tea, please return my cup,
The pealing of my bell is heard: the time is up!"

There was a sudden knock at the door and rushing up through the garden gates was seen the third rival, who appeared not with gorgeous apparel, but only too sure with the glorious success. He had, though weary, travel-stained and covered with dust, brought with him the little golden bell. In his eagerness to present it to his love in the most brilliant con-

A Chinese Story-Teller

dition, he had polished the bell, regardless of the fact that he himself was almost unrepresentable. Still it was the accomplished deed, and with bashfulness and happiness which bask in the sunlight of realization, he laid the heavenly bell down at her little golden lilies, and sat down by the well in the garden. Without any further remarks, but with a sad countenance, the literary genius went out and informed the archer that they had lost all, and that the athlete had gained the heart and hand of the beauty of that district.

The umpires came forward and the music was set to playing. The singers were called and the athlete was announced to be the best knight errant, and with the usual decorum and marriage ceremonies of the time was introduced to the love, wisdom and companionship of one of the prettiest, wittiest and most accomplished girls of celestial story.

The story of Ming Hwang of the Tang dynasty (A. D. 762,) is the title under which Huan Tsung is one of the most popular and execrated characters in Chinese history. He reigned forty-four years, and was known be-

A Chinese Story-Teller

cause of the brightness which attended the inauguration of his reign, and the calamities which distinguished its close.

This man began his reign by introducing reforms, civil, political, social and religious. One of his remarkable decrees prohibited wearing costly apparel. It is said that he had an immense bonfire made in the royal palace of the most gorgeous and splendid tapestry and clothing. Two factors were at work in the court. His trusty and wise minister Chang, administering the empire justly, but the crafty eunuchs and others encouraging licentiousness, revelry, and the neglecting of other people's rights, so much so that the security of the state became assailed. In A. D. 735, a concubine named Yang Kwei Fei,* of great beauty and attainment, was brought from the western states to the palace, and given to the emperor's eighteenth son, Prince Shai. It is said of her that the moon and spirits blushed at her charms, and the fragrance of her sweetness intoxicated men. Ming Whang became so enamored with the imperial favorite that the lovely Princess Yang was soon enrolled among the ladies of his

*See Mayer's Chinese Manual.

A Chinese Story-Teller

seraglio, for whom he exchanged one of his own less attractive beauties. He named her Lady Chen, in honor of the mystic goddess, Si Wang Mu, and it was not long before this woman, who was gifted with intrigue and cunning, assumed control of his palace, and commenced an era of infamy, disorganization and dissolution. She was like another celebrated Chinese woman, who had fallen into melancholy and would not be induced to smile until the feudatory princes were summoned to the capital by false alarms of beacon fires lighted on the hills. It is said of her:

"Clever men build up a city,
Clever women cause its fall,
Clever women may have charms, yet
Owls and vampires are they all.

"Women with long tongues but lead you,
Step by step, to harm and woe,
Not from heaven come such disorders—
'Tis from women that they grow;
It is only wives and eunuchs,
Nothing learn and nothing know."

The emperor became more and more satisfied with his amorous bride, and as in many other cases in Chinese history, the family of Yang Kwei Fei shared the lavish gifts and

A Chinese Story-Teller

appropriations bestowed upon her by the court. Finally three sisters of Yang Kwei Fei came into the harem, and shared certain portions of territory given them by the state. It is said that the tributaries were ransacked for jewels and ornaments of gold and silver to adorn them at the numerous festivals in the gardens of the oriental palace.

At this time one of the powerful ministers, a servile favorite of the Turkish court, named Ngan Lu Shan, came into popular distinction. In his hands and in the hands of the three sisters of Yang Kwei Fei and of their brother, Yang Kwo Chong, the empire was thrown into disorder and blaze of revolt. In the rebellion organized by Ngan Lu Shan, the debauched emperor in A. D. 756, together with the imperial cortege, took flight to the western cities of China. This hegira ended the story, for their beaten and famished soldiers took revenge in the massacre of the Imperial party, and divided among them the spoils of the delinquent and corrupt court. In his dying moments the enamored monarch gave orders to this favorite eunuch, Kao Li Sze, to strangle his favorite, Princess Yang.

A Chinese Story-Teller

Thus the name of Ming Whang, whose reputation, together with that of his paramour, is one of the danger lights in Chinese story, is to-day a warning to the state, and is told on the streets of the cities as a moral to the millions of the people against falling from high and virtuous office through the lusts of life.

There was a famous sorceress* in Yeh, the ancient site of the present city Chang Teh in Honan. This woman beguiled the people by her magical arts, and with her many sooth-sayers and confederates gained every year large sums of money from the people. At an appointed period in each year the god of the Yellow river was represented as wishing to take a wife, and a beautiful girl was chosen from some family for the purpose. After bathing her and clothing her in bridal attire, sacrifices having been previously offered, she was led into a slightly built house in the shape of a boat on the river bank.

This was hung around with red curtains, befitting a bridal chamber. It was then set afloat and soon sank in the river. Under the solemn stars and by the light of many lanterns,

*Vide "Typical Women of China," by Miss Safford.

A Chinese Story-Teller

the god of the Yellow river was said to come up in the river and receive his bride. The weird scene has no parallel in history. The sorceress declared that if the maidens were not given to the river god, he would cause the river to overflow, desolate the country and drown the inhabitants. Many families who did not wish to sacrifice their daughters moved away.

At length, Si Men Pao was made governor of Yeh. He assembled the elders of the city and said, "When next a woman is given in marriage to the river god, you must inform me. I wish to be present with my court."

On the chosen day, he was on the river bank with his attendants. There were thousands of spectators, and there, too, were the sorceress and her band of female disciples ranged in order behind her. Si Men Pao said, "Call the wife of the river god." The maiden stepped from within the red curtains. Pao looked at her a moment, and turning to the sorceress and her master of ceremonies, San Lao, coolly observed, "This woman is not beautiful. I must trouble the chief sorceress to go and inform the god of the Yellow river that I will substitute a hand-

A Chinese Story-Teller

somer woman, and by day after to-morrow will send him his bride."

Then he ordered his retainers to pick up the chief sorceress and cast her into the midst of the river. This was done, the governor and his courtiers waiting quietly awhile.

"Why," asked the governor, "is this chief sorceress so long in returning? We must send a disciple to quicken her steps"—and one of the younger sorceresses shared the fate of her instructress. When three of the disciples had thus been drowned, Pao said, "The old dame and her disciples being women could not explain affairs properly. I will trouble San Lao to go down and make all clear," and the master of ceremonies was thrown into the river.

The people were all greatly alarmed, and Pao after a brief space of time would have had the two remaining confederates cast after their companions, had they not by kindly submission and entreaties obtained his pardon.

The female disciples all scattered and fled, and no one dared to speak again of the ceremony of giving a wife in marriage to the river god. Neither did the waters of the Yellow river overflow at that time, and the people hereafter had peace from such calamities.

CHAPTER V

SLAVERY TO HABIT—PLEASURES OF OPIUM—SORROWS OF OPIUM.

IT should be remembered that there are habits and customs that are peculiar to and associated with certain professions, just as there are special weeds and atmospheric effects native to a particular environment. One does not expect preachers from the racecourse any more than a man would look for figs from thistles. Chinese story-tellers are mostly opium-smokers. Shi Kwei Piao was no exception to the rule. These men were deluded in the use of the poisonous drug in the lie that it was a brain-tonic and nerve stimulant. All this time he was becoming more and more under the snare and influence of the opium-smoking habit. Nearly all of his earnings went to satisfy his abnormal craving for the body-emaciating and soul-destroying drug. Although Shi earned good wages at story-telling, he was ragged, wearied, homeless and a social outcast. Under the ban of the fascination, the temporary craving would be relieved, but not satisfied. The

A Chinese Story-Teller

torpor immediately following the action of the alluring drug was sometimes accompanied by dreams of subtle enchantment and solemn calm.

The pains of the opium craving produced melancholy, nervous irritation, and that state of physical inertia whose prevailing mood is incapacity, feebleness and remorse. Under the spell of the seductive drug, Shi became an opium-eating inebriate. He relates how his imagination refused to rise unless stimulated by this demon tonic of celestial delight. Was there pain, fever, or inactivity, the opium was immediately resorted to, and O, what a revulsion! It was but a step from torment to elysium! The pain was gone and in its place the most complete peace of mind and self-satisfaction prevailed.

He could say with the notorious Thomas DeQuincy, "Here is the balm for human woes, corked up in a small flask and yielding ecstatic joys to its fortunate owner." As to its physical effects, opium does not always intoxicate. It produces no state of body like that which results from alcohol. For the pleasure given by wine is always mounting and tending to a crisis, from which it gradually declines, while

A Chinese Story-Teller

the delight that opium gives is stationary for eight or ten hours. While one is a flame, the other is a steady and equable glow. Wine disorders the mental faculties; opium is said to produce the most exquisite order, legislation and harmony.

The same writer says, "Wine unsettles and clouds the judgment, while opium brings serenity and a judicial calm to all the faculties. The one leads to absurdity and extravagance; the other to composure of thought and action. And," he adds, "it seems to me while an inebriate man is controlled by the brutal part of his nature, the opium eater feels that his divine nature is paramount, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity, and over all is the great light of the majestic intellect." These are the confessions of Thomas DeQuincy, the ensnared famous English opium-eater. They describe the pleasures of opium, and voice the sentiments of millions of those in China who are thus held under the spell of the iniquitous drug.

During his mental and physical struggle to break the opium manacles, Shi's experiences coincide much with the confessions of Thomas

A Chinese Story-Teller

DeQuincy. The difference lies here. One was surrounded with the luxuries of the west and took opium with his eyes wide open, while the others are the victims of the infamous political and commercial autocracy which the East India Company with the guns of a Christian nation forced upon China's millions. With reference to the English-Chinese Opium wars some writer has written the sad and yet only too true confessional:

"What time we crossed the yellow main,
And cried to terrified Cathay:
'Either be poisoned or be slain,
Your body, or your soul, come say—
One of the two we mean to slay.' "

Speaking of his torments, this Anglo-Saxon opium-eater said, "I hated and abominated all I saw. At some stages of the malady that haunted my brain, there appeared silvery lakes welling into seas and oceans, and upon these rocky billows innumerable human faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing! They surged up by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries! And even now the memory of those terrible visitations linger in my heart.

"Though I have overcome the mighty sor-

A Chinese Story-Teller

cerer, the terrible tyrant opium who came to me as a pleasant friend developed into a gloomy master, and still the dread swell and agitation of those stories have not wholly subsided. My sleep is tumultuous and dreadful faces peer at me under cover of the darkness."

The opium demon reigns in China. Shi tells in his own peculiar way how he threw himself into the struggle with the monster. He taxed his iron constitution in almost superhuman efforts to break with the habit. But he was held with a vice. The foregoing description drawn from a western source will show what are the fascinating spells produced and the awful nightmare of the after effects.

CHAPTER VI

HEARS THE GOSPEL—HIS IDEA OF JESUS—MEETS A
MAN—THE NEW RELIGION—HIS STORY CHANGING
—SICK—GOES TO CHURCH—AWAKENING—
WANDERING.

THE winter of 1873 was spent in the town of Ku Cheng. There was a preaching hall in this town under the auspices of the China Inland Mission. Shi soon became known to the missionaries and native evangelists there. His genial manners, genuine deportment and wonderfully versatile powers in conversation made him a welcome guest in the reception room. More than unusual interest would be exercised by Shi on his hearing for the first time the explanation of western religious classics.

Like hundreds of other Chinese, however, the first presentation of Gospel light had no illuminating effect on his clouded mind. In fact, it is reported of him that on reading for the first time a copy of Mark's Gospel, the story-teller found new and peculiar material for his use. Especially was this so in the details of the healing of the sick, giving sight to the

A Chinese Story-Teller

blind, raising the dead, and other strange miracles. The stories were new and novel, and as there was no copyright on them, Shi stored them in his memory, searched Chinese literature in vain for like examples, then told them afresh, or incorporated them into his own stories, taking the orator's liberty to add his own coloring in rich oriental form to the record.

Shi's idea of Jesus was that of a wonder-worker, hence it was not surprising that he should often speak of him as "the great western conjurer." He said of this period that the new material worked into Chinese stories was both a mental tonic and a financial boom. It took well. Like the Egyptian story-tellers, Shi had also, by intuition, grasped the law of adaptation, and to his ever varying hearers he became pliable, plastic, and quick-witted in gathering up anything and everything which would help to swell the sum total of "cash." He called these days afterwards the darkest days of his brightest story.

In the early spring of 1877, a native Christian evangelist named Chen Loh Suen happened along. He came from Yangchow, Kiangsu province, and was selling portions of Scripture

A Chinese Story-Teller

and preaching as a colporteur. Evangelist Chen located in the Ku Cheng chapel and mission. Being a man of intense earnestness and consecrated common sense, he soon pacified and gathered around him some of the *plebian* class, as well as the *literati*. A revival set in. Here Chen met Shi Kwei Piao. In the mission hall, our hero had engaged him in debate. They were attracted to each other. In this street story-teller, Chen discerned a new herald of the new religion. From his native historic stories, Shi had already infused into his own character much of the heroic element. He treated daily in the market places of noble instincts and the chivalry of Chinese life and story.

Chen Loh Suen was quick to read into Shi's character and temperament. He saw there a man with a voice, and perceived that the Lord had need of him. Like a preacher of righteousness, Chen Loh Suen won with love, but struck with steady and constant aim. Sin was denounced. Repentance was demanded. Faith was emphasized. Obedience was insisted upon, and the conditions of citizenship in the new kingdom clearly stated.

A Chinese Story-Teller

Shi became openly hostile. These questions referred themselves to him in his soliloquies. Was this a new religion? What about the ancestral faith and worship? Did not this religion come from over the seas? Had not the "foreign devils" invaded Chinese life and society? And was not this religion of the alien race who had inflicted upon China's millions the sorrows of the opium plague? Bitter persecution set in. Shi became the leader of the opposition party in the town. His gifts in oratory served him in his unholy zeal. Shi went deeper and deeper into sin, but was haunted with fears while the conviction that he was a sinner deepened upon his soul. Priests were consulted and offered no peace of mind. The scholars could only talk in the language of a philosophy which was away in the clouds of empty imagination. Notwithstanding all this, the arrow of conviction had struck into his heart, and Shi was being moved into the faith he so bitterly opposed.

All through the summer of 1878 Shi worked on his old lines as a story-teller, but with less enthusiasm than before. Some of the ambitious and voluptuous heroes of whom he daily sang

A Chinese Story-Teller

in the streets and lanes of Chinese cities were no longer his ideals. He had heard a new story. It was taking hold of his inner life. Shi became conscious that his voice was echoing an empty sound. Though persecuted by him, Chen Loh Suen never left nor lost sight of him. He was restless to win this soul, and felt sure that God was working in him. Every opportunity was taken to secure the interested inquirer, and in time the hardened heart was broken. Love had reigned. He found himself to be a lost sinner, and began to seek the Savior.

The Chinese summers are very severe and unhealthy. Thousands of the poor people in the crowded, steaming, filthy cities and towns were dying of dysentery and malarial fever. Constant exposure, irregular habits, want of proper food, and the draining of his system by the opium poison, had physically weakened Shi and made it possible for a successful attack of malignant fever. He was visited in his poor old thatched Chinese house, ministered unto, and the Gospel story told to him again and again. Another native Christian named Wan Siao Chuen used constantly to attend on Shi,

A Chinese Story-Teller

and on his recovery exhorted him to attend the services of the village church at Yu Fan Tein, a little village three *li* from the town of Ku Cheng.

It was a bright Lord's day morning when Shi entered the mission church and quietly took his place on one of the plain deal benches in front of the Chinese mission preacher. It was a little unpretentious thatched cabin, with mud floor and walls of smoothed, dry clay, here and there brushed with a little white chalk. The seats were rude and backless. If any had only three legs, they were set up against the wall. An old table with the little red cloth (official color) hung neatly over, served as the pulpit and reading desk. The theme was fitting and the hearer ready. The Lord blessed the word, and the seed of the kingdom took still deeper root in good and honest ground.

Other influences also tended to quicken into fruition his awakening thought. Shi began to realize that he must forever, if he wished to openly profess the Christian faith, finally break with the opium habit. While he was engaged in this long struggle with a terrible snare which he realized was tightening its death grip upon

A Chinese Story-Teller

him every day, he engaged often in prayer and earnestly sought help from every source. Still the fiend reigned within. But Shi had a newly found source of strength and hope, and he pressed on with a heroism of constant, slow, but ever upward striving. Truly of this man it may be said:

“His warfare is within, there unfatigued
His fervent spirit yearns, 'tis there he fights,

And hoping, wins fresh triumphs o'er himself,
compared with which

The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.”

It was in the first month of the new year, 1880, that Shi went to Twen San, a town about thirty *li* from Lai Ang hien, a city in Anhuei province. Here he was again confronted with poverty and ill-fortune. The Chinese story-telling fascination was waning, and in the darkness and trial of these days of suffering, a new life was being generated in his soul.

At Twen San there were those who were members of the Christian Church at Ku Cheng, and adjacent thereto was also a small village chapel erected by the zeal and consecration of Mr. Tsih, one of the ablest Chinese Christians of this generation. Shi was able to throw in

A Chinese Story-Teller

his lot anywhere. His natural ability made him apt at almost anything. Necessity found Shi working in the position of a water-pot repairer and kettle and oven mender for a few months in this small agricultural town.

CHAPTER VII

AT YU HO TSZ—IN NANKIN—POVERTY—THE VICTORY
—AMONG OLD FRIENDS—THE DAWN OF DAY.

IN the sixth moon of this same year, Shi made his appearance in Yu Ho Tsz. He came over to see some old friends and to seek work along lines which were more congenial and convenient to him. Sometimes he was farm laborer, bricklayer, thatcher, carpenter, innkeeper's assistant, and when a favorable opportunity occurred during the evening hours on the village street, he was back again at his old familiar means of story-telling.

Shi lived in and around Yu Ho Tsz village for several years, making this place a sort of social rendezvous, and from it wandering all over the country. He was traversing districts and finding out, though unconsciously, means and methods of itinerancy in which afterwards in the telling of his new story he should excel as a traveling evangelist.

It was during the winter of the year 1885 that his brother, Lao Kao, took him over the river to Nankin. It was while in the vicinity

A Chinese Story-Teller

of the luxurious, profligate and gay southern capital that he suffered the most of all his hardships of hunger and the opium thirst, together with its attendant vehement cravings and sorrows. Like himself, his brother was poor and destitute, though he was spared the pains of the opium habit. It was while they were in this great city that the news came to them of their father's death in Anhuei. As filial sons, they should have done their duty in going home and attending to the rites of the funeral customs, but actual want and a long and desolate winter stared them in the face, and prevented their even fulfilling the imperative claims of social and family rites. He would fain have been suffered to have buried his father but he could not. Eastern obsequies, even with the poor, are elaborate and costly.

Under the arches of the Han-si-men bridge in Nankin, Shi Kwei Piao and his brother lived most of the winter. It was a mere beggar's hovel. The sides were patched up with matting, as the picture shows, and a sort of tent-like shelter made to keep out cold and driving sleet and snows. Shi's brother worked as a wood cutter and fuel carrier, and by

A Chinese Story-Teller

arrangement with him, Shi was enabled to help him most of the day and share his earnings, while at night he still smoked away his wages in the opium poison.

In the fourteenth year of Kuang Hsu, 1886, about the time of the vernal equinox, Shi and his brother were on the streets of Nankin city. They wandered listlessly into a small preaching hall where announcement gave the welcome to scholar, agriculturalist, merchant and artisan. The mission preacher was the venerable Rev. Charles Leaman, of the American Presbyterian Mission. As the two men sat and listened to the foreigner speaking in their own language, their interest deepened in this wonderful story. Conscience was again quickened and aroused. The influence of that consecrated native evangelist, Chen Loh Suen, never left him. He realized that he was a sinner, and he determined that he must be saved.

Here came the terrible ordeal with the opium demon. In this severe test of strength, patience and courage he again strained every nerve to face and fight the unnatural appetite for the seductive drug. It had become part of his physical existence, and had eaten into the very

A Chinese Story-Teller

core of his life. Friends advised him to break slowly with the habit. But Shi knew this meant a greater struggle in the end, hence he set his will with a mighty determination and trusted in God for the result. Seven times did he break with the habit only to yield again. He had become a victim to the use of opium and that addiction had become a snare. In the last awful struggle, Shi says he closed with his demon enemy in the arms of death. It was a contest in which a soul was writhing in throes of an alluring and yet soul-destroying monster. The dark, strong and lasting tempest was within. His wearied limbs and dull eye corresponded to emaciated body and wrecked senses. The agitation was colored with remorse, and in the solemn reveries of the after effects of opium eating trances, Shi was haunted with demons and weird nightmares. But the struggle was to be won, and he played the man, while he staked his life on the securing of the emancipation. Dr. W. E. Macklin stood by him during his sufferings and encouraged him in the conviction that he would win the palm.

These were days of trial and character-testing moments. Friends still urged him, saying,

A Chinese Story-Teller

"Give it up and seek relief again in the celestial balm." Here was a proof of the real mettle of which this man was made. He was being tried by fire. The refining was to be after a kind that would stand the test. The molding was gradual and was allowed to set in its own place. For seven days and seven nights in burning hunger, thirst, weariness, fears and excruciating pains, Shi was pleading with God in prayer for relief from the craving for the drug. After days without hope and nights without sleep, the Lord gave deliverance, and on the seventeenth day of the third moon (1886) the light broke in, the chains rolled away, and the captive was free.

How truly has Tennyson expressed the sentiment where struggling man

"Breaks his birth's invidious bar
And grasps the skirts of happy chance;
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star."

Shi returned, after his breaking opium, to Ku Cheng district in Anhuei province, where he met many of his old associates, and there told them of his wonderful deliverance from opium. They of course accounted for it by his

A Chinese Story-Teller

own inherent determination. Shi gave the praise to God, and determined to let them know also that the Gospel was "the power of God unto salvation to *every one* that believeth." He had not yet, however, openly confessed the Lord in the obedience of baptism. Still he was learning the way of life more perfectly, and on his return to Ku Cheng and the surrounding districts, Shi found the work there largely strengthened. Numbers had been added to the church, and the evangelistic campaign actively enforced. In the little hamlets that were dotted between the wild rugged mountains and beautiful fertile valleys were many humble homes that could each be called "a place of prayer," and this where heretofore the frenzy of idol worship and all its empty ceremonies were so much cherished.

In and about the fifth month of 1886, he again came to Nankin and became associated with the foreign missions. It was here he met with more encouragement in his seeking after God. Having quite a general knowledge of literature, his love of research was intensified in his larger discovery of truth. In Nankin were to be seen and felt the political unrest,

A Chinese Story-Teller

moral disquietude and social alarm which were due in a measure to the throes of a dying religious system. For even then among the masses, faith in idolatry was breaking, although the decisive era of its downfall was not yet ushered in.

Like the early converts to Christianity in the first days of its propaganda in Asia Minor, so to-day in China, India, Japan, Turkey, and even Africa the untrained mind is staggered at "the cold, barren, unimaginative character of the Christian religion." Looking with almost tearful eyes at retreating heathenism, a warm, poetic, fanciful, ritualistic, Asiatic human has said, "Think of our classic heroes, sages, temples, processions, candles, incense, chantings, prostrations, penance, pilgrimages, altars, priests and sacrifices. Think of our rich ambrosial nectar, the feasts of the gods and genii, the georgeous ceremonies of the worship of heaven and earth, the communication with occult forces, the answer to the soul in nature, poetry, art, philosophy and mythology. Then ponder over all the wealth of classic fancy and romantic legend, and wonder, if you can, why we Eastern people turn with scorn from the

A Chinese Story-Teller

Christian Cross, with all of its imagery, decorum, and symbol stripped naked, and offered to us as a vain, cold, reasoning, analytical religious system."

The foregoing plaintive dirge would be almost pathetic if the facts of heathenism were not known. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them," must forever be the bar at which these non-Christian systems are to be judged. This marvelous saying of Christ expresses a truth which is at one and the same time axiomatic, philosophical, final. It is true there have been other illuminants in the world, but they are not his light. Though rich in fancy, rare in thought, and almost sublime in pathos, the broken systems of earth-born minds have signally failed.

It was in this light that Shi Kwei Piao let go his hold on heathenism. There was no Savior in it. Buddhism is the answer to the teaching and spirit of Gautama, Confucianism is the highest expression of the mind of Confucius, Mahometanism is the child of the Koran, Brahminism is the articulation of the Vedic philosophy and Shintoism is the answer to the religious knowledge and aspirations of

A Chinese Story-Teller

the Japanese. They have produced after their kind and are themselves the strongest argument for their own helplessness, failure and despair.

While this is stern, solid fact, yet even in these "lone letters" in the alphabet of religious science may be traced the elements which will lead them to spell and articulate the word, spirit and message of truth.

"All the means of action,
Lie everywhere about us,
What we need is the Celestial fire
To change the flint into transparent crystal
Bright and clear."

While in Nankin occasionally attending preaching services, he met Dr. W. E. Macklin, who was then living at a small Buddhist temple called Lai Tsz Ang. By invitation he became a sort of assistant post-messenger, carrying letters between the different missionary stations and the local post office near the shipping wharf at the river side. It was from Dr. Macklin that he learned much and more of the way of salvation. As the light dawned upon him, he asked to be baptized. Having known considerable of him, the doctor was duly satisfied that Shi's request was genuine, and he baptized him in a pond outside the old temple. He was

A Chinese Story-Teller

classics and beautiful doctrines of love, forgiveness, patience, hope and worship. The Christian classics (Bible) are for all mankind. Men of all times and languages read and chant them. It tells us we are sinners. Our own nature is proof of this. It says that the supreme God commiserates the race, and opens the way of reconciliation.

The middleman (intermediary) sent was His own beloved Son. His earthly title is Jesus Christ. This means Savior and Lord. He has official rank and power over and above all other prophets. In the holy records you can read his holy life, mission and death for our sins upon the sacrificial cross, according to the will of the Supreme and compassionate God. I charge you to read these records. In them you can learn of God's love and his salvation.

It is the distinguishing character of Christianity that it is a living religion. It deals with living things. It speaks of living waters, the living bread, living epistles, and of the living God, and of him who died and is alive for evermore. Never once does it pledge its hope in the past. It looks forward to a living, glorious future. It quickens our spirits, animates our hopes, and illuminates our lives, while we run our race here below.

Jesus triumphed over death, and is the all-powerful advocate now in the heaven of the heavens. He is the great eternal High Priest of ten thousand ages, and now by faith, repentance and obedience to his Imperial decree, and without incense, penance, fastings, pilgrimages, idols, processions, temples, priests and chantings, we can turn away from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

The average Chinese audience is about the same peculiar make up whether in street,

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW STORY—A CHINESE SERMON—CHINESE
AUDIENCES—WITH CHEN LOH SUEN—A NATIVE
CHRISTIAN.

ALONG the highways and in the market towns, at busy fairs and quiet hamlets, Shi was recognized as the old story-teller. But his story was changed. To rich and poor alike he related his newly learned story, and this with unabated zeal and increasing wisdom. This required considerable courage. Shi often told how he went to these old scenes with the consciousness of the bitter scorn that was in store for him. He had voiced, too, with prophetic daring some of the hardships of a new convert, and all these were so fully to be realized in his own experience. Preaching in the villages was no easy matter. Ever and anon the proud, haughty Confucian students would be ready to debate with him in cynical and despicable pride.

The dust of idolatry and the glitter of pagan worship everywhere surrounded him, but only to serve him with subjects and themes for his

A Chinese Story-Teller

discourses. It is impossible to describe the wonder and magnetism which was produced by his preaching. Shi told of a living, mighty, compassionate God—the God and Father of the sages—and of his commiserating love for the rebellious race. Into the new and living story he would work the mission, life, example and sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the whole world. With intense fervor and with a force and eye whose expression was an irresistible persuasion, he proclaimed the Gospel of redeeming grace to those to whom no tidings of him ever came, and to bring the Light of life to those who sat in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death.

“Friends saw the picture once; it moved them so
They ne’er forgot its beauty and its truth.”

The following is a free and condensed report of a sermon by the Chu Cheo preacher, Chinese Evangelist Shi, and it is a fair specimen of his general preaching. While it is impossible to fill in the Oriental coloring and enthusiasm in delivery, yet it can be seen from the discourse what power, illustration, and consecrated conviction accompany such a message.

A Chinese Story-Teller

Friends, Citizens and Brethren:—The Chinese proverb says, "Let him who would aim high stoop low." This is excellent doctrine. The little brother who dares to stand before this illustrious and intellectual audience is stooping low. His message is not his own. No claim to greatness is assumed. It is the Christian idea, also, that he who would be highest must serve. More than any other teacher, Jesus emphasized this. Our Chinese philosophy is very fine. We are rightly proud of our ancestry, and the antiquity of our empire. But Christianity, although a newer faith, is a brighter light. Confucius said: "I do not understand life, how can I know death?" Jesus proclaimed life and immortality through the Gospel. It is the system which is the expression of the will of the great Supreme ruler of the universe. It will not only illuminate, but it will save the world.

Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism may be likened to three gilded lamps without either oil, light or heat. "But," you say, "our systems are grand and ancient." All right then, I will ask you a question. "Have they done us any more good than to give us a code of ethics? Can they save from sin? Do they offer any Savior? Can they give the heart eternal peace?" I say, "No! no! no! our condition in the world to-day answers this!"

Jesus, who speaks in the name of God, says, "A tree is known by its fruits." We must judge of our religion, ancestry, ideas, ideals, and dearest and cherished hopes by this test. Earthly systems and learning create, but do not fulfill the desires. Christianity has all fullness back of it and in it. It is not for a tribe, or an age, but for ten thousand years and all the millenniums of eternity.

The Christian religion has its sages, holy men, heroes, martyrs, teachers, priests, and sacrifices. It has ancient

A Chinese Story-Teller

classics and beautiful doctrines of love, forgiveness, patience, hope and worship. The Christian classics (Bible) are for all mankind. Men of all times and languages read and chant them. It tells us we are sinners. Our own nature is proof of this. It says that the supreme God commiserates the race, and opens the way of reconciliation.

The middleman (intermediary) sent was His own beloved Son. His earthly title is Jesus Christ. This means Savior and Lord. He has official rank and power over and above all other prophets. In the holy records you can read his holy life, mission and death for our sins upon the sacrificial cross, according to the will of the Supreme and compassionate God. I charge you to read these records. In them you can learn of God's love and his salvation.

It is the distinguishing character of Christianity that it is a living religion. It deals with living things. It speaks of living waters, the living bread, living epistles, and of the living God, and of him who died and is alive for evermore. Never once does it pledge its hope in the past. It looks forward to a living, glorious future. It quickens our spirits, animates our hopes, and illuminates our lives, while we run our race here below.

Jesus triumphed over death, and is the all-powerful advocate now in the heaven of the heavens. He is the great eternal High Priest of ten thousand ages, and now by faith, repentance and obedience to his Imperial decree, and without incense, penance, fastings, pilgrimages, idols, processions, temples, priests and chantings, we can turn away from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

The average Chinese audience is about the same peculiar make up whether in street,

A Chinese Story-Teller

chapel or inn. Attention is the main desideratum. The crowd is ever a restless, busy, curious, suspicious one. Indifference rather than hostility is usually the rule. The chapels are crowded to excess. Some sit, while most stand, press up to the platform, gaze listlessly around, smoke, eat peanuts, joke, criticise, and without any idea of appearing ridiculous, ask the most foolish questions. Sometimes when the most solemn truths of the Gospel are being presented, some innocent but bold Celestial will suddenly rush to the speaker and ask the price of his trousers, remark about his collar, cuffs, and boots, and create a circus of fun by asking the foreigner if he undresses to sleep, or whether he does not find it difficult to catch the fleas in such tight fitting garments.

Returning to Ku Cheng, in spring of 1889, Shi had the pleasure of meeting his old friend, Chen Loh Suen. They talked together of all the things that had happened since last they met. Shi was now more than the bewildered inquirer of the Way of Life. He had found peace. He had obeyed the Lord in baptism, and was learning the discipline and education of the Christian life.

A Chinese Story-Teller

At the invitation of Chen Loh Suen, Shi took a journey of about 100 *li* northeast to a city called Si Cheo. The mission was one of preaching and colportage. It was to be Shi's first experience at book-selling. This work of Bible distribution is one of the best aids to evangelization. The colporteurs are the outposts of the new evangel. Their itineracy is often skirmishing, mapping out the field, picket work, while they act also as scouts on the frontier line, communicating news of strategic points as to the enemy's position, strength and plans.

They were out on the Gospel commission, and were two able men. One a student and tried preacher of the Word, the other a new and enthusiastic convert, whose limited knowledge of the Scriptures was supplemented by his wonderful descriptive powers in presenting the main facts of the Gospel. In Shi Kwei Piao's message, however, there was illumination, force, apt and telling anecdotes as well as the convincing argument of common sense. Speaking of him, Chen Loh Suen said, "It was his lucid and animated address, together with his personal magnetism, that won for him the

A Chinese Story-Teller

attention of the crowd that had gathered in from the country villages." It was a most successful trip, and they realized the Lord's blessing and presence with them.

Part of the winter was spent at Ku Cheng, with occasional trips over the country. At this time, Shi became acquainted with the sainted Tsu Lao Sien Seng, of Fuh Hing Tsih, a genuine Israelite indeed. He was much strengthened in his faith and encouraged by his associations with this faithful, aged pilgrim on the celestial road.

Tsu Lao Sien Seng was a Christian teacher settled in a small hamlet near Chu Cheo, Anhwei province. He had extensive lands and a large family. Two of his sons attended to the farm and lived with their families on the one estate. Shi was often welcomed into the home circle and learned much of the Word of God from this venerable Chinese Christian.

Through the influence of this good man and the oversight of the Christian home by the devoted missionaries of the China Inland Mission, settled at Ku Cheng, the whole neighborhood became influenced and evangelized. Mr. Tsu built a small church and encouraged meet-

A Chinese Story-Teller

ings in his own home, and thus set up a self-reliant, independent idea in Chinese missions in that district. In a few years Mr. Tsu passed to his eternal home, and on his death-bed earnestly committed the charge of this work to his two sons, who inherited the estate, but who unfortunately have not inherited the father's faith, hope or love.

CHAPTER IX

A PLOT—A MARRIAGE—LAND PURCHASE—ANIMOSITIES
—TRIAL BEFORE HEATHEN TRIBUNAL—TAKE NO
THOUGHT WHAT YE SHALL SAY—SPIRITUAL
BLESSING.

IN the village of Yu Ho Tsz there were now left two able witnesses of the truth. During Mr. Wan's life, Shi Kwei Piao did a good deal of work in that district, but now the old innkeeper was gone, Shi, for prudence sake, left the village, and came down to work with the Mission in Chu Cheo City. He did this for a year, occasionally making trips with us to the villages, and preaching by the way.

It seemed to be the inevitable that Shi Kwei Piao should throw in his lot with Mrs. Wan, so after careful and prayerful consideration of the subject, and talks with her relatives and friends, it was decided that if there was no hindrance, Shi should be married to her and together they could carry on the work of evangelization in that region.

Soon, however, opposition set in, and dark clouds began to cover the horizon. The rela-

A Chinese Story-Teller

tives of Mrs. Wan, who were nearly all heathen and who were also bitterly opposed to her Christian work, sought every means possible to get her away from the village mission. Having no son to be responsible for her, and there being only an adopted daughter, Wan King Mei, who was also a Christian, the relatives of Mr. Wan, claimed her as their property, and laid a scheme to forcibly eject her from the home, carry her off to some strange place, and sell her as a slave or concubine to some unworthy heathen.

The plot was laid and the arrangement made. Unknown to any of the mission, some men of evil repute in the village were hired to assist the band of robbers. They had sworn by the heathen deities to carry out their object. It was a dark night. The gloom favored the chance. Suddenly the stillness of the village night was aroused by a clattering of hoofs, clanking of swords and the firing of pistols. The whole village was terrified, the people coming to the conclusion that an organized robber band was attacking for plunder. In the lurid light of burning torches stood vicious looking men fully armed. Horses were hitched

A Chinese Story-Teller

to the door post, and soon the doors were staved in. They rushed wildly to the bedside of Mrs. Wan and her adopted daughter, and cruelly dragged her out, and while part of the robbers kept the villagers at bay, the rest of the ruffians set about binding the Christian captive to the back of one of the horses. All was confusion, din and terror.

The heart-moving appeal of Mrs. Wan to be released touched the hearts of the braver men among the villagers. (What a hero this story would have had could Mr. Shi have been in town that night!) Mrs. Wan pleaded for her life and for her character. Said she, in broken tones, "If I have done anything of this shame, then let all my neighbors curse me, and let me be taken captive with my daughter. If I am to be persecuted merely because of the open violence of men who wish to make merchandise of me, then I beseech you as a helpless woman, deliver me from this cruelty."

The petition was both a prayer and an appeal. The effect was electrical. Paralyzed hands became active. Strong young men were moved. There was a sudden united movement on the part of the villagers. Desperate strug-

A Chinese Story-Teller

gles ensued. She was rescued and unbound. The robbers were tied to the tree posts, disarmed, and the weapons handed to Mrs. Wan and her daughter. Here came a crisis. The people called on her to shoot them, while the cowardly culprits pleaded for mercy. In rehearsing this story, Mrs. Wan has often related what a struggle went on in her breast. She had it in her power to kill them. The neighbors would have applauded her and the law would have justified her action, but, said she, "I was under a higher law. It cost me so much to overcome, but I remembered Jesus's having said, 'Love your enemies,' and it seemed as if the feeling of revenge died away."

All the night long the debate went on between the captive robbers and the villagers. After a lot of skirmishing arguments, it was agreed at about daylight to let the robbers go, but to hold their arms as a guarantee of future good peace and as a pledge of their promises never to return. So at daylight the robbers were set free, and as the sun rose over the village of Yu Ho Tsz its usual busy life was ushered in. All around the eating-tables outside the Chinese inns the struggle and victory

A Chinese Story-Teller

of the previous night was the theme of general conversation.

Notwithstanding this unwarranted attack on the name and character of Mrs. Wan and her daughter, she continued to teach and preach in her village home, and from her lips thousands of travelers have heard the message of redeeming grace. The robber incident and the fact of her loneliness there, and being entirely without protection, led us to the inclination to sanction Shi Kwei Piao's proposals for marriage with her. This was exactly in accordance with Shi's wishes, and in harmony with Mrs. Wan's also; for although during her first husband's lifetime, he had acted as general assistant in their Chinese inn, she saw in him a man of no mean ability, and knowing full well his Christian character, powers of oratory and persuasiveness in preaching, she recognized the Lord's hand in sending her not only a true helpmeet, but a strong arm in connection with the founding of the work in that district.

Although they were both Christians, it was, nevertheless, quite a difficult thing for these early Chinese Christians to understand their truest and highest relationships. Having been

A Chinese Story-Teller

in earlier years his mistress as the owner of the inn, it became no easy thing for Mrs. Shi to take the place of a wife and helper. Both of them had quick tempers, and it was often the cause of antagonistic arguments and "social typhoons." From a western viewpoint, Shi would have seemed to have treated her a little coldly, but it must be remembered they were Asiatics, living in a Chinese village and surrounded by all the habits and precedents of their environment. Genuine love and Christian grace soon overcame local custom, and their lives stood out exemplary, self-sacrificing and regenerate.

As the years went by in Chu Cheo, the mission began to shape itself into line for permanent work. Hitherto the mission buildings were rented thatched houses. Besides being unhealthy, these wretched mud houses were rented at high rates. There was no alternative but to do this in the beginning of the work. The great difficulty had been to secure men who were willing, at any price, to rent houses to the "foreign devil." Chinese ancestor Chao's experiences demonstrated this. This old man of seventy years of age was taken to

A Chinese Story-Teller

the prison-house in disgrace for this act. While giving a supper one evening, on the occasion of the visit of Dr. A. McLean to Chu Cheo, this celestial veteran related his unjust trial in a remarkable way.

The mission building then occupied by the workers was a batch of houses arranged within the Chinese courtyard, comprising three long narrow rooms and covering quite a large piece of ground. The houses were separated like three small barns with a courtyard between each. The front house facing the street was plainly furnished as a chapel. The center and rear rooms were used as living and sleeping apartments. It was indeed a rude enough structure; the walls were of mud with rough clay plaster, and the floors were of hardened clay also. The ceilings were made of a grass and mud cover (thick with dust) which is laid over the bamboo sticks to support the thatching. In a country where the tropical heat of summer is favorable to the production of lizards, snakes, centipedes, tarantulas, large spiders, mosquitoes and scorpions, besides numerous rats and mice which swarm Chinese houses, these native huts, for they are mostly only

A Chinese Story-Teller

ground floor high, are most inconvenient and miserable as dwelling houses for Occidentals.

Yet during the formative years of work in Chu Cheo, this batch of Chinese houses was the central mission station north of the river, and from it the sound of the Gospel went out far and wide. Several times the house and its valuable contents in our "only little all" was nearly destroyed by fire. In and around its compound again and again was it the scene of eager and angry disputants. Several times the house was stoned, once it was purposely fired, and the lives of its occupants threatened with destruction on more than one occasion.

The presiding magistrate of the city was a man of very anti-foreign tendencies. From the very first he had opposed the work, but we were assured that God's purposes were not to be frustrated by a Chinese official. Hence in 1892 our land purchase was promoted. Most of the neighbors and friends who had assisted us in securing a lot for building purposes were terrified by the yamen authorities. Some of them had to pay heavy fines. Others were imprisoned in filthy dungeons. All were in danger of the confiscation of their property by the civil and military authorities.

A Chinese Story-Teller

After endless arguments, discussions, feasts, and the thousand and one *et cetera* which must necessarily attend buying land, such as settling the price, fixing the family squabbles, securing title deeds, compensating neighbors, courting the favor of the official, and stopping the mouths of evil-doers by a small feast or a few round dollars, the great day of the purchase had arrived. This was to be the occasion for the handing over of the silver, signing the documents, and attesting the same in the presence of witnesses. Following the Oriental custom, invitations were sent out on strips of red paper to the large crowd concerned; tables were laid with from twenty to thirty courses of Chinese viands. It was thoroughly appreciated. But this was not all. The extras had to be reckoned with. It meant the inevitable "tipping," bribing of yamen scribes, paying stamp duty, and making a present to the chief magistrate. After all this Chinese red-tape paraphernalia, surely the right of title to this little corner of land would be justifiably considered fairly safe.

Even after all this, however, there were causes for trouble. The magistrate looked

A Chinese Story-Teller

through his cunning almond eyes for a further bribe. The workers were given to understand that a hundred ounces of silver ingots would secure them from law-suits which might be brought by unwilling neighbors. This, of course, was not forthcoming. The middlemen were then arraigned before the magistrate. He demanded an apology of them. His idea was to extort money from these underlings. It was an exhibition of the Chinese "squeeze" system.

Yamen runners were dispatched to the mission compound, and Shi Kwei Piao was called for. Under the pretence of being given an audience with the official, he was hurried into the judgment-hall. The Chinese court was crowded with on-lookers. The official was angry and meant mischief. "Tell me," roared the Chinese official, "why did you forsake the traditions of the fathers and follow the strange religion? How is it you have deigned to help these barbarians?" Shi was standing bravely before the heathen tribunal. This was immediately noticed. He was at once ordered to kneel in the presence of the magistrate. He did so. "Have you anything to say why you should not be convicted?" cried the angry ruler. Shi Kwei Piao raised

A Chinese Story-Teller

his head and respectfully addressing the official, said, "Great and honorable ruler, it is in your power to hear of this doctrine, and little brother humbly bowing before thee will even attempt ——" "Strike him on the mouth," the enraged official called to one of the Chinese underlings. It was the soldier whose business it was to smite criminals on the mouth for any false witness who raised his bamboo to strike him. One of the secretaries sitting behind the official immediately motioned to the soldier, and half whispered in the official's ear, "We cannot punish him in this instance. It is not merited. Will he not appeal to the mission, and would not the great man lose face by this act?" Shi Kwei Piao was still kneeling before the court. Hundreds of curious on-lookers were eager for the result. These men had often heard the voice of Shi Kwei Piao in the Jesus mission hall. Would they punish him? Will the magistrate take away the face from the foreigners? All this time, whispering conversation and soliloquizing went on while the secretary was conferring with the magistrate. Suddenly there was a call for silence. The magistrate motioned that he was going to speak.

A Chinese Story-Teller

"Go your way, mean, unworthy patriot, and perhaps in later days I will call for you again." Between several soldiers, Shi Kwei Piao was ushered out of the court, and escorted out into the night by the cynical and disappointed Chinese military rabble.

During that same evening, seated round the fireside talking together over the experiences of the day, Shi Kwei Piao related what had passed in the court between him and the official. He said, "I shall never forget the occasion when I first stood before him, I trembled. But the longer I was there, the stronger and more courageous I became." He said it seemed as if the angels whispered in his ear, "And when they shall bring you before magistrates and governors for my sake and the Gospel's, take no thought what ye shall say or what ye shall answer, for it shall be given you in that hour of the Holy Spirit what ye shall speak."

Following this season of persecution came a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Additions to the churches in Yu Ho Tsz and Chu Cheo strengthened Shi's faith. He attended the annual conventions of the

A Chinese Story-Teller

Christian mission held in Nankin, journeyed with the workers to their fields of labor, studied the Bible with increasing delight, evangelized the villages and did splendid service as a preacher and pastor in his own village home. Mrs. Shi often traveled with him around the agricultural districts, and in company with the missionaries they learned much that is valuable in the work in its organizing and executive demands. Wherever she went Mrs. Shi found a ready audience among her Chinese sisters.

CHAPTER X

THE ADOPTION OF AITSZ—A CHILD OF LOVE—NATIVE
EVANGELIST—REHEARSES SOME STORY-TELLING
EXPERIENCES.

IT was during the winter of 1893 that an incident occurred in the Yu Ho Tsz district which showed how wonderful a transformation the Gospel had made in the life of Mrs. Shi. Love was to reign supreme where formerly selfishness was enthroned. During a bitter cold winter night, one of the neighbor women in a poor Chinese hut was alone passing through nature's trial. The babe was born about two o'clock in the morning. None of the comforts and cheer of Christian enlightenment were there. Down on a bundle of dirty straw thrown on the mud floor, with the dim light burning from the pith wick in a dish of bean oil, lay the mother and child. The family was of Mohammedan descent. The husband was a cold, hard-hearted heathen, with developed passions of the lowest type.

Arriving home soon after the babe was born,

A Chinese Story-Teller

he coarsely and loudly asked whether the lucky genii had given a girl or a boy. The answer from that mother's heart came with fear and dread. Knowing how cruel were his intentions, seeing it was a girl babe, she for a moment hesitated in anguish to answer him, and then remembering his frenzy, sobbed out in despair, "It is a little girl."

No sooner had the words escaped her lips than did the owner ("father" is too sacred a name to use here) of the tiny babe began to curse and vow vengeance on its little life. "Throw it away on the hills for the wolves to eat," he cried in anger. "Oh, I cannot," said the sorrowing mother, her womanly tenderness and love causing even her to forget his brutal determination. "Cast it out," he roared, "or I will dash it to the ground." "Oh, compassionate Heaven!" sobbed the mother, "May I——" but before she had time to plead more the heathen brute was rushing upon her, and ready for his murderous act, had prepared to slay the young life.

Quick as thought she snatched up the newly-born gift of sorrow and slowly glided out of the house into the cold night air. A piece of old

A Chinese Story-Teller

cotton wadded rag was tenderly wound around the little body, and rather than throw it on the hills for the wolves to devour, this heart-broken heathen mother stood beside the high bank of the river running by the village, and choosing rather to have the little life washed down the cold stream and die peacefully by drowning, she pressed the babe to her bosom, gave it a long farewell, and with a quiver, bowing to the inevitable, she let it roll down the steep dark bank. Not wishing to hear the splash, she turned sadly and hurriedly away, and blinded by her tears and anguish she gave up the babe forever.

As soon as the dawn arrived the Chinese women were at the river side washing their rice and clothes. Mrs. Shi was up earlier than usual. God was using her as his messenger. Stepping down the incline and choosing the heavy flag stone on which to stand in the creek to wash the rice, she was astonished to see the form of a wee babe. Was it alive? What could it mean? She looked again and again. The thought suddenly dawned upon her. It was a little newly-born outcast. The tiny form was yet alive. Half the legs were in the

A Chinese Story-Teller

water, and yet the body remained warm. It was wrapped around with cotton-wool rags, which served the purpose of its swaddling clothes.

"I will claim it for my own, and as from the Lord," said Mrs. Shi; so gathering up the little life, she carried it home. Soon it was being bathed in a tub of hot water, while willing hands rubbed the little mite with warm cloths. It took several hours before circulation was set up, especially in the legs and lower portions of the body, but it revived and was cared for very tenderly by Mrs Shi, her adopted daughter and her new companion, the evangelist.

It was named Ai Tsz, which is the Chinese word for love. The babe grew and has become a shining light in their household. What a contrast in the condition of the child to-day with what it would have been if it had been raised in that heathen home. Little Love soon became the popular favorite. She now plays in and around the mission compound, and interests a great number of the women callers. To-day the little girl sings the sweet songs of Zion in the church services, classes, meetings, etc., and often accompanies her energetic and consecrated parents in their village trips.

A Chinese Story-Teller

It is the intention of the mission to educate Ai Tsz in the Christian girls' school in Nankin, and then to train her as she develops ability, as a woman evangelist and teacher to her own people. Mrs. Frances Herzog Osgood assumes the support and education of Ai Tsz, the little redeemed Chinese outcast in whom are centered so many hopes and so many aspirations.*

Although the real mother of Ai Tsz has enjoyed many a quiet visit from Mrs. Shi, together with the sweet little "Love," yet, in keeping with Chinese law upon the question of such an adoption, the parents forfeited forever all claim and jurisdiction over the child; nor does the mother ever speak of it as her own.

From the year 1889 Shi Kwei Piao had been engaged by the mission as a native evangelist, and worked with the mission there and at other places in that same capacity with grace, wisdom and fruitfulness. He was the associate in work with E. P. Hearnden, A. F. H. Saw,

*One of the most pathetic facts connected with the life of this little Chinese "*unwelcome* girl babe" is that for many long and weary months its natural nourishment was begged of the poor native women as they passed through the Chinese villages.

A Chinese Story-Teller

T. J. Arnold and E. I. Osgood, and all the time has been the writer's closest colleague.

Whether in the evangelistic field or in the pastoral office, Mr. Shi has proved himself an able, wise and efficient worker. He wins men by love. This is his persuasive art in preaching. In journeys, in trials, in joys, in sickness and in death, our devoted and able brother has been always abounding in the work of the Lord.

During the riots of 1891 he showed most commendable tact in dealing with the hostile mobs. While journeying with different members of the mission in trips to Kaifengfu, Feng Yang Fu, Hwai Yuen Hien, Si Cheo, Luchefu, Wuhu, Luhoh, Chu Cheo, Nanking, Shanghai and Tsungming, he has exhibited a degree of experience and caution which has been extremely valuable to those who have accompanied him, and in many instances has protected the workers from open violence.

During the China-Japan war the village church at Yu Ho Tsz was the scene of much disorder. Disbanded soldiers and unfriendly students constantly disturbed the peace of the village. The Chinese troops passing through

A Chinese Story-Teller

were very hostile, and again and again threatened them with death and torture. Shi maintained the evening preaching services as usual to large audiences, and even some of these cowardly and bloodthirsty soldiers were won over to a more conciliatory attitude.

In 1896 came the difficulties attending the erection of a missionary home in Chu Cheo. It was agreed to build it about two years after the land had been purchased. The temper and disposition of the people had to be considered before a mission building could be raised on this hostile ground. Mr. Shi helped in many ways and it is difficult to see how the obstacles could have been so carefully and yet so thoroughly overcome without his kind and tactful assistance.

While visiting Nankin in company with a fellow missionary about this time, Mr. Shi was invited in the house of a Christian missionary to give a representation of his former story-telling-life and experiences. With the ease and precision and grace of a speaker and actor "to the manner born" he arranged his little table, and using an enameled wash basin for a drum, was soon at his avocation once again.

A Chinese Story-Teller

The western audience could not of course fully appreciate his abilities, but he gave them a feast of reason and flow of soul after the manner of his own experiences and history.

In China there are thousands of these gifted, brilliant, genial and sympathetic men, who, if by the witness of the missionaries and the power of the Holy Spirit they are converted to the new and living way, will do more to bring about the evangelization of China than perhaps any other agencies, means or methods.

CHAPTER XI

DEATH OF COLLEAGUES—BUILDS A CHURCH—A MINI-
ATURE "FARM COLONY" AMONG THE POOR
—A PATHETIC SCENE.

THREE months after the mission building was completed in Chu Cheo and the two resident families of Messrs. Hearnden and Hunt were in possession of the first semi-foreign house in the district, a terrible calamity came upon the mission in the sudden removal by death of E. P. Hearnden. Shi Kwei Piao felt this blow very keenly. He says: "It took the light out of my eyes and saddened these busy days of my ministry." Returning on July 10, 1896, from a trip in the country some six miles away, where he had been visiting some native Christians, E. P. Hearnden was drowned with his horse while attempting to ford a swollen stream in the hills.

Shi Kwei Piao was ready with wisdom, sympathy and grace. After some twenty hours the body was recovered from the river. Thousands of Chinese lined the banks. It was a most impressive sight. For the first time the

A Chinese Story-Teller

Chinese in that region saw the foreigner in the presence of his dead. The Chinese officials clad in their robes and accompanied by their retinue were in attendance to keep order. As soon as the body was recovered, the missionary was signaled to make his way to that end of the stream. The officials made way for the missionary to come alongside the banks for a formal identification of the body. A Chinaman standing by said with seeming pity and wonder: "See how he reverences the dead. He weeps and bares his head, are they not like unto us?"

All through the night vigil, Shi slept in the open air by the side of the large Chinese coffin containing the mortal remains of his beloved colleague. Several soldiers also were commanded to remain with him. There was a rumor that the robbers were planning to raid and steal the corpse and demand a heavy ransom for it. The body was not allowed to enter the city, or even to be carried into an old tottering Buddhist temple by the river side, so great was the superstition of the credulous people. The resourcefulness of Mr. Shi, together with his genuine sympathy, made the way very

A Chinese Story-Teller

much easier for the sorrowing widow, both in the long journey with the coffin to Shanghai, and also in the interminable settlement of the claimed expenses connected with the finding of the body and procuring of the coffin.

Only eighty days after this sad interruption of the mission work in Chu Cheo, the heart-broken wife of E. P. Hearnden (Katie Robina) was also called to her reward. Mr. Shi said of them, "In life they were one in heart, and in death their souls were reunited for the service of the celestial kingdom above."

As soon as Evangelist Shi had been settled in his village home in Yu Ho Tsz, the mission work in that region began to assume shape and proportions. Mrs. Shi was an earnest Christian. She read and knew her Bible. This intelligence and wisdom gave her social prestige in the eyes of the illiterate Chinese women, while her hospitality and well-directed charity made her a modern Dorcas in the town. In their own home they instituted a church and preached and practiced the truths they knew of the gospel. This little meeting place might aptly be termed "a place by the riverside where prayer was wont to be made." Mrs. Shi was

A Chinese Story-Teller

known far and wide as the "hot-hearted Christian," and her husband as the "large stomach man"; the former meaning "earnest" and the latter indicating the stomach as the seat of intellect.

The little village church in Yu Ho Tsz was built by them, with the aid of native subscriptions and practical help. Mrs. Shi cut the grass from the hills for thatching the house, while Mr. Shi did most of the joinery and carpenter's work in the roof. The walls were made of clay battened down with straw, and a fairly substantial and purely native structure serves them to-day for a house of worship.

The idea of Mr. Shi to help the native agriculturalists led to the institution of a plan to purchase land and property. This was done with native subscriptions. The idea was to place on it industrious farm laborers, at a moderate rental, to be paid in grain according to the value of the harvest. In this way, not a little has been done to relieve much suffering, while at the same time emphasis has been laid on the dignity the Christian religion places on labor and aggressiveness in social reforms.

In miniature, they have inaugurated a "farm

A Chinese Story-Teller

colony." Mr. Shi is the head of the settlement. With native funds contributed, preserved and dispensed by the converts, they have purchased several houses, gardens and lands on both sides of the village street in Yu Ho Tsz, and the measure of success which has attended the scheme in its inception and growth inspires confidence to greater things and guarantees a larger success for future plans.

Under the able superintendency of Shi, the village churches in Chu Cheo and Yu Ho Tsz have grown considerably. They are full of good works and grace. It is our prayer for them that they may "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

On one occasion during the winter of 1896, after famine had impoverished the country and pestilence decimated the population, when the poor were suffering sadly and marauding bands of robbers infested the neighborhood, an encouraging incident occurred. Mrs. W. R. Hunt had sent up boxes of clothing and lengths of cloths for Mrs. Shi and the women's classes to

A Chinese Story-Teller

make up into garments for the poor. On Mr. Hunt's weekly visit to the mission station, he found Mrs. Shi with sparkling eye and joyful face. She opened a parcel of some eleven garments which she had made by putting together patched work pieces. In the streets of the villages, we noticed some curious things. Some of the boys were wearing foreign vests, and they were so proud of these as to put them on outside of their clothes. One little boy had on an old vest which formerly belonged to Prof. F. E. Meigs, of Nankin, which, on the outside of his clothes, seemed to fit like a small overcoat. It reminded one of Dr. Paton's experience in the New Hebrides, when the proud, dark-skinned bride appeared at the altar with a pair of brown stockings on her Nubian black arms, which answered to a pair of dress gloves.

On another occasion, during the distribution of relief and other philanthropic work in Chu Cheo, a poor woman who was found in one of the vacated temples was relieved. She was found in a most deplorable condition. Her son was lying on the heap of straw across the mud floor. He was burning and emaciated with typhoid fever. Dysentery had wasted him to

A Chinese Story-Teller

a skeleton. The scene was heart-rending. With a broken rice bowl in her hands, she made her way through the streets and lanes of the city begging rice for her boy. She had scarcely any clothing to cover her, and was out day and night in the cold winter air. Pitying her in this condition, A. F. H. Saw invited her home to the mission house. She received some clothing, among which was an old pair of Mr. Saw's trousers for the boy. To our amazement, while on the street the next morning, the woman appeared with her usual begging equipment, but proudly dressed in Mr. Saw's trousers—and she had adjusted them wrong side round.

In the village of Yu Ho Tsz one Lord's day morning, just as the church bell was about to be rung, some beggars placed at the gates of the chapel a poor, dirty, ragged piece of broken humanity such as would have made the angels weep. Thinking to excite sympathy the beggars had placed this one of their number on the ground. Mr. Shi was soon bending over the diseased leper who was blind, lame, deaf and dumb, and practically dead to all feeling. The worst form of Asiatic leprosy had crumbled away his

A Chinese Story-Teller

legs to the knees; these were exposed and the corruption was revolting. Pouring in a strong solution of corrosive sublimate for antiseptic purposes, Mr. Shi sorrowfully told them the poor man was past all assistance, and they carried this piece of living death away. It was a type of the heathenism, hopelessness and spiritual death all around us in China.

CHAPTER XII

THE CITY CHURCH—DARK CLOUDS—TIMES OF REFRESHING.

IN connection with the building of the city church in Chu Cheo, Mr. Shi did considerable of the preliminary work. In company with the late A. F. H. Saw he helped in planning, arranging and settling with the Chinese builders, and in a thousand and one ways contributed to the successful issue. In this building, which is one of the best owned church buildings in the mission, Evangelist Shi's voice has been raised with convincing argument and power.

Audiences composed of the literati, artisans, merchants and agriculturalists, rich and poor alike, together with an occasional official retinue, have been held spell-bound for hours under his preaching. Orientals, unlike westerners, are not bound by the rule of a thirty minutes' discourse, nor is it absolutely imperative that there should be the three conventional parts to a sermon. Shi exhibited the true genius of the speaker, magnetic, attractive, logical, his preaching bristling with points and illustra-

A Chinese Story-Teller

tions. In the application of truth he early learned the art of clinching his argument with indisputable facts.

In the church building some four hundred people can be seated. The women's annex is a great boon and was the gift of friends of the late Mrs. E. P. Hearnden. Through the wisdom and foresight of Evangelist Shi a formal opening of the chapel building was arranged. This was preceded by an official visit on invitation to the church. It was readily acceded to. The Magistrate, Literary Chancellor, Military officer, Salt Revenue Commissioner, city elders and others all attended with their escorts, and seemed to appreciate the courtesy thus extended to them. The visit to the church building was preceded by a tastily prepared semi-Chinese feast.

These mandarins took especial interest in the baptistry. Suspicion in the minds of the ignorant people had been aroused by evil reports that the foreigners used this "religious bath" for drowning baby children and extracting their hearts and eyes with which to make medicine. The apt quotation of a passage from the book of Mencius, viz.: "Though a

A Chinese Story-Teller

man be sinful, yet if he fast and bathe himself, and adjust his heart, he may appear and worship before God''—this appeal to their own classics served as a fitting, though incomplete, illustration and helped to clarify the idea to the Chinese mind.

Famine and pestilence had thrown a dark pall over the northern and central provinces during the summers of 1897-8. Driven from home by sheer want, thousands of refugees flocked down from Shantung and Honan into the more salubrious southern clime. Even in Anhwei the distress was keen. It was utterly beyond the power of the missionaries to cope with the magnitude of the need

Evangelist Shi and his wife did good work in sheltering quite a number of outcasts. In co-operation with the Chu Cheo missionaries he administered much relief. The city was daily canvassed, absolutely destitute cases receiving first attention. Food was administered, medicines given and shelter sought for the sick and dying. With the consecrated and never wearying devotion of Albert F. H. Saw much was done to alleviate suffering and to point these poor, helpless, homeless families to

A Chinese Story-Teller

the loving and living God. Action rather than language was the surest and most direct means of communication.

It was during these soul-stirring, heart-sickening and body-wearying days of famine relief, that our hopes were blighted, when an epidemic of typhus and typhoid fevers broke out. This self-sacrificing service in broken rest, irregularity, and depressing state of affairs almost prostrated the workers, and finally cost our devoted missionary colleague Albert F. H. Saw his own life. Mr. Saw contracted the fever while attending to a poor, emaciated out-cast refugee who was dying of typhus fever. With that loving tender sympathy which characterized his every action, Mr. Saw placed his hand over the fever burned brow of the dying man and, while pointing him to Jesus, himself took the contamination of the malady. After a few brief days of illness the tired body refused to be built up, and he died peacefully and triumphantly in the Nankin Christian hospital on May 17, 1898.

Evangelist Shi purchased his coffin on the streets of the native city and escorted the mortal remains of his second foreign missionary

A Chinese Story-Teller

brother to the grave. These strange interpositions of Divine providence had temporarily a peculiar effect on Evangelist Shi's mind. Staggered by the suddenness of this calamity, he waited long days in prayerfulness of spirit before God, but never doubted the wisdom of the Lord's will.

To the bereaved and devoted wife and widow of Mr. Saw the assurances and consecrated services of Mr. Shi were a constant source of comfort and inspiration. He saw also how and with what resignation, submission and glorious hope the Christian can look on the death of loved ones. To him such faith and joy was a stream of light breaking from the tomb of every redeemed one. Death's shadows were merely a forecast of the glory beyond, and so these dark clouds were chased away and the future unknown made resplendent in the golden light of the resurrection morn.

Strange indeed would it be if the days were all dark even in heathen lands. The withering storms, cold and heat, fire and flood, pestilence and famine, sorrow and death preceded a wonderful benediction. The interest in the preaching of the Gospel and the healing of the

A Chinese Story-Teller

sick had aroused the people. Audiences were steady, full and continuous. Every Lord's day witnessed additions to the church. Village homes, mountain hamlets, farm houses and other places eagerly welcomed the missionaries and the message. The seed time of the work of long years was beginning to yield fruit.

In some districts the idols were cast down, burned or destroyed, Christian text pieces put up in their places, heathen customs abolished, little field temples vacated, superstitions thrown away, and whole communities became deeply and sincerely interested in the Christian faith. Numbers of women and young people were baptized and put on Christ, and in this way the whole tenor of the home life was completely transformed.

Although this was openly known to the officials and literati, there was no apparent opposition. Little did the missionaries dream of what during the summer of 1900 was being planned by the Imperial Court in Peking.

"To do God's will, that's all
That need concern us; not to carp or ask
The meaning of it, but to ply our task
Whatever may befall;
Accepting good or ill as he may send,
And wait until the end."

CHAPTER XIII

THE "BOXER" REBELLION—ARE THE MISSIONARIES
TO BLAME?—THE BREAKUP OF HEATHENISM—
THE OUTLOOK FOR THE NEW CENTURY.

THE "Boxer" organization has extended its influence through several dynasties. It is a religio-political cult. Based on superstition, it gains its followers and receives support largely from the debased priesthood of Buddhist and Taoist schools. In its recent program it aimed at the abolition of the Manchu rule, and pleaded for a return to Chinese exclusion and isolation. It was the strategic *coup d'etat* of the Empress Dowager and her entourage, which turned its angry tide from the court to the foreign invaders of the country. The rally-cry of an anti-foreign crusade united its members and auxiliaries, and the "Big Knife" Society commenced a sanguinary campaign in a declaration of war against civilization.

Financed and sanctioned by Imperial decree, it spread like a prairie fire. It astonished and won to its banners the ignorant and lawless masses. By hypnotizing the young men and

A Chinese Story-Teller

creating a belief in demonology, the idea became prevalent that they would be invulnerable to foreign bullets or swords thrusts, and that they would be triumphant and invincible in war.

The scum of the Empire was gathered to its ranks. The Imperial troops joined the insurrection. The highest Manchu princes patronized its aims and aided its designs. This was in May 1900. Like a bolt out of the blue sky then came the anti-foreign edicts calling on the native Christians everywhere to recant. Failing in this, there followed the "Red Edict," ordering the universal massacre of all missionaries, including men, women and children. What happened is known to the world.

All through the anarchy and confusion of the Boxer rebellion, Evangelist Shi held the reins of the work in Chu Cheo and sometimes in Nankin. This was no easy matter. The whole empire was convulsed. In this tremendous encounter between opposing forces and ideals, the very foundations of the empire have been shaken.

It should be, moreover, written to the credit of missionaries in China, that they share at

A Chinese Story-Teller

least a portion of the responsibility for the recent outbreak. Missions undermined heathenism and preached emancipation from civil and religious bondage. They announced reform and denounced oppression. Unlike the state institutions, the idea of missions was to reveal rather than to conceal knowledge. A clash of civilizations ensued, and the collision of antagonistic ideas brought about the terrific impact. If missions had not part of the glory for the present wonderful transformation in the mighty Sinim, it would be a moral travesty on its executive and individual consecration, education, aims and purposes.

Mr. Shi believes the present upheaval to be in the straight line of the overturning that is to supersede the greatest reform in Asia. He sees in it through struggle and victory, contest and defeat, triumph and reverse, the signals indicating a new regime and the final triumph of Christian civilization.

It is evident that the breakup of heathenism has begun. The moral partition of China is already instituted and the dismemberment of idolatry already initiated. Mr. Shi says, the real "spheres of influence" will be the unevan-

A Chinese Story-Teller

gelized regions and that the "open door" will be the hitherto all but closed dependencies in Thibet and northeastern China. But as in Asia Minor in the first century, so in the Asia Major of the twentieth century, there is a great and effective door opened unto us and there are many adversaries.

The night of Asia is surely passing away. Darkness and clouds have been round about. The storms have been raging, kingdoms have been wrecked, thrones removed, and the nations involved in war, while ancient, venerable, defiant and cruel heathendom has brought to mind its lurid and ghastly description as depicted by Milton:—

"Black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell."

Yet the recent cataclysm has dispelled the mists; and as the best light must come through the clearest air, so we shall know the meaning and see the wisdom of the omnipotence which permitted such a tempest in order to usher in a new and brighter day.

We may trace these disturbances partly to psychological reasons. Was there not indicated the unrest of a dying religious system? Yes!

A Chinese Story-Teller

And in China, Christianity has come through the furnace refined as pure gold. In the splendid heroism and faithfulness unto death of thousands of its best exponents is evidenced the conviction of things not seen. Although it is not easy to read the meaning of it all, yet we must believe as seeing Him who is invisible, and know that

"God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold,
We must not tear the close cut leaves apart,
Time will reveal those calyxes of gold."

History teaches that all great and permanent changes cost. Nor are they accomplished in a hurry. God's ways are inscrutable, but they are unerring. Mark the divine hand in the wonderful preservation of China. Thoughtful men are pondering over the problem of the future of this wonderful country. For some great and grand purpose God has opened the doors of the walled kingdom to the world. Through and by means of agencies political, commercial and moral the empire will be reconstructed and regenerated. The transformation of such a conglomerate is the miracle of all the Christian centuries.

The divine purpose in preserving the phys-

A Chinese Story-Teller

ical vitality of the race, the unity of the state, the conservatism of religion, the opening of the country to mission work, the inevitable yielding to aggressive and profitable industrial demands, the preservation of government through thirty changes of dynasty, the counter-forces against ravages of climate, the preventing of the depletion of the population through pestilence, war, famine, and successive rebellions,—all these wonderful preserving and conserving miracles have a deep and wide interpretation in the purpose of His great plan.

The opportunities and privileges of work in China will be greater than ever. The whole empire will be thrown wide open. Railways are now piercing and tunneling the walled kingdom. Science has utilized the wing of fire and made it the means of communication with the realms afar, while the telephone connects the nearest distances and aids the swift carrying out of His commission. Science, art and invention are proving wonderful economic, social and moral benefactors.

Knowledge is increasing; ignorance and prejudice are doomed. The international interest in China is growing greater every year. Nations

A Chinese Story-Teller

are learning that they do not live unto themselves. The relations of missionary, merchant and government are being better understood. These mutual relations must expand because they are the efficient guarantee against "commercial antagonisms," "political jealousies" and "religious animosities."

The outlook for the new century is vivid with solemn and yet glorious possibilities. The unchanging purpose of God must be fulfilled. It is He who reigns and rules in the heavens. "He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." China is not outside the economy of God's eternal purpose. It is the greatest and costliest mission field in Asia. The blood of martyrs is already bearing witness that it is the seed of the Church in China. There will be no retreat! Doors, fields and spheres of larger content, grander scope and richer fruitfulness are opening anew. *The urgent, imperative and supreme* need is for evangelists to travel, preach and witness in every hamlet, village, town and city and herald the everlasting and celestial story of redeeming grace.

When it is remembered that China is one of

A Chinese Story-Teller

the last and greatest of the heathen nations to be evangelized and civilized, let it also be remembered that she is one of the last to have heard the story of Divine love. To all of her teeming millions must now be told the story of redemption. It will be the last, grand, triumphant achievement of the Christian Church to secure this great rich and worthy gem among the empires and in adoration cast it at the feet of Him who redeemed it by His own precious blood, while we sing:

“Come, then, and added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to Thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world.”

CHAPTER XIV

CHINESE VILLAGE PREACHING—THE TYPE OF THE NATIVE PREACHER—METHODS AND AGENCIES OF GOSPEL STORY-TELLING.

EVANGELIZATION in China, as in all other lands, must be centralized in order to become diffusive. The large cities, therefore, are the central bases of an aggressive campaign. There are, however, other strategic points which, although considered less politically important, are none the less supreme in the work and progress of missions. Heathen fields in particular afford splendid opportunities of evangelizing in the villages. In China alone there are more than a million large towns and villages outside of the seventeen hundred walled cities.

China is one of the most crowded countries in the world. Every time the shades of night fall like a curtain around and on Asia's darkness, the walled cities are locked, sealed and guarded against invading robber foes. The villages look after themselves. Every farmhouse is well armed. The villagers are brave,

A Chinese Story-Teller

open, honest and industrious, and are largely free from the cankering vices of city life.

It is easier to evangelize in the villages, though personal hardships have to be cheerfully endured. Matthew says, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages preaching and teaching the Gospel of the kingdom." Luke says, "And He went on His way through cities and villages teaching." Mark says, "And wheresoever He entered the villages or into cities, or into the country, etc." It has been the experience also of the oldest missionaries that it has often been wiser to open new fields by commencing in the villages and towns. It has been by this means that some of the most important cities have been opened to missionary work.

Chinese Gospel story-tellers have very little difficulty in securing or holding an audience. On entering a village it is usual to take a seat at one of the rustic old tables that are placed outside the Chinese inns, call for a cup of tea, for which the sum of five copper cash will be paid, and then politely to rise before drinking any yourself, and pour a small cup of tea into the cup of the guest who sits with you at the

A Chinese Story-Teller

table. You have thus secured yourself in harmony with the rites of local decorum. Conversation is very easily started by exchanging the usual compliments in regard to honorable name, age, residence, prospects of harvest, condition of trade, etc. By placing on the table a small pile of books, attention is at once called to the missionary, as well as to the work in which he is engaged.

There are in China many secret inquirers, like Nicodemus, after the Teacher sent from God. While staying at Chinese inns for the night the opportunities for conversation and for preaching are splendid. In these places are gathered travelers, pilgrims, merchants, coolies, soldiers, and yamen runners, together with the ubiquitous student, thus representing every phase of Chinese life and character. Some very warm and interesting debates are sometimes engaged in by the light of a pitch wick lantern and around the log fire. This preaching is sometimes continued into the early hours of the morning, most of the people either smoking or drinking tea the while. Sometimes in these midnight vigils will be seen an old man limping by the aid of a staff along the narrow,

A Chinese Story-Teller

muddy, irregular streets, with lamp in hand to light his way (there is no regular street lighting in China) to the inn where the itinerant missionary is staying for the night. Hundreds have for the first time thus heard the precious words of redeeming love in the quiet of these evening and midnight hours.

There is a strategic value attaching to the fact of each mission station having its own well defined field of itineration. In large centers, where this principle is usually applied, the field is thoroughly canvassed and systematically worked. This is often its largest sphere of influence and the best circumference of its work.

In their examination of the Gospels the native preachers are impressed with the wonderful ministry of Jesus in the towns and villages. They study and appreciate the divine Master-preacher as an ideal teacher; nor do they lose sight of the fact that He was in his education, habits, sympathies and environment an Asiatic. In the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures the Chinese native evangelists evidence considerable intuitive wisdom and discriminating intelligence. Evangelist Shi

A Chinese Story-Teller

Kwei Piao was once very forcibly reminding an audience of native preachers "that the Christian religion was like water in that it could not stand still without becoming stagnant." On this same principle it is just as true that light must either shine or decline. It means that life must either circulate or terminate. It means either an extensive or an intensive work. It should also be written to the credit of our Chinese evangelists that they have understood the New Testament teaching, that to reveal or conceal are the only alternatives in the Christian commission.

The Chinese evangelist seems to have natural gifts and endowments which contribute in no small way to his mental and moral equipment. With a devotion to spiritual ideas and natural love of classic learning, he is easily trained in the study and application of the truths and principles of the Christian religion. In his physical make-up he is not less well furnished. Length of limb and strength of arm is the rule and not the exception. With remarkable powers of endurance, ability to abstain from food through long and weary hours, he will work in a spirit which can exercise patience

A Chinese Story-Teller

under the most trying circumstances. These are facts which need to be better understood to be better appreciated.

In a country where there is an absence of all the conveniences of travel, it will be understood that these men have to do all their traveling on foot. A mere office-seeker would soon be able to find an easier if not more lucrative position. A native preacher will strap up his Oriental bed, and with a couple of towels and an extra pair of straw sandals, will think little of traveling a journey of thirty, forty or fifty miles to a village church, and on the following day preach morning and evening, besides leading an open-air service in the afternoon. He always preaches by the way. The sun is his timepiece as well as his luminary. In large cities, outside busy courts, at market fairs, by roadside wells, or in village hamlets, he will take his opportunity to converse with the people, at the same time seeking a favorable moment to distribute Christian literature as occasion demands.

Most of the regular native preachers are trained men. They are grounded in faith and in doctrine. A course in common-sense is part of the curriculum. In association with the

A Chinese Story-Teller

training schools and under the direct influence of the missionaries, they grow in grace and in practical wisdom. The Chinese Christians and evangelists love Bible study, and in their devotion to their work and testimony they put to shame millions of mere nominal Christians in other lands. In their exegesis of its truths they are freed from the accretions of ecclesiastical theolore and creedal crystallization.

In the work of selecting and training the native preachers the utmost discriminating love is necessary. Many a good Christian would be spoiled by taking him from his daily vocation and putting him into the ministry. All need constant sympathy, guidance and oversight. What they may seem to lack in administrative and executive ability, they make up for in the readiness and the faithfulness with which they trust and fulfill the plans of the workers.

There is genuine worth in them. The stern, faithful qualities of hundreds of these able Gospel story-tellers, who recently bravely endured the most shameful ignominy and death in the massacres in northern and southern China, ought to put to silence the cold criticisms of unbelievers.

A Chinese Story-Teller

In and around Tai Yuen Fu, In Shansi, and all through the provinces of Chili and Shantung, numbers of the ablest native preachers and native Christians were publicly beheaded. Some were burned after their bodies had been saturated with kerosene oil. Some were buried alive and in a few cases whole Christian families were obliterated. One native preacher was crucified on the door of a church.

They were promised deliverence if they would only go to the temples and worship idols and blaspheme the name of Christ. A few of the weaker members recanted. Mr. Tsung, of Peking, was seventy-six years of age and the head of a large Christian family. He was met by a band of "Boxers" on the street and asked to deny his Lord. They said, "Are you a Catholic?" He said, "No, but I am a believer in Jesus and a member of His church." They beheaded him on the spot, and sliced his flesh in pieces and threw it to the scavenger dogs on the Chinese streets. This is only one of many instances which might be cited to prove with what heroism, devotion, patience and joy these newly instructed converts endure persecutions, suffer social ostracism, and constantly bear

A Chinese Story-Teller

nameless indignities rather than recant or deny the sacred name of the Lord Jesus who redeemed them by His own precious blood. Some of the critics who do their best to shadow the worst, who ignorantly discount and denounce the faith and genuineness of what they call "Chinese rice-Christians," would have made a very poor stand indeed if they had been called upon to suffer even the mere threat of the tortures that were inflicted upon these brave souls "of whom the world was not worthy."

Although there are a few Bible schools in association with the older missionary societies for the express purpose of training native evangelists, yet nothing has been done commensurate with the need along this all important line of work. Here is an opportunity for the Christian Church. The call is loud, long and real. Soon the open door may be closed. Already upon this virgin soil has been cast the tare-seeds of sectarianism. With a plea, strong, clean, pure and true, because based upon the facts and authority of the Word of God, there is an unprecedented invitation open to the Christian Church to plant the living principles

A Chinese Story-Teller

of New Testament Christianity in this mighty heathen empire.

The native evangelists are the outposts of the mission stations. Their intuitive wisdom and knowledge of the country makes them fine scouts and sentinels on the frontier line. They raise an expectancy, arouse interest, prepare the way, and sharpen a religious appetite. In this line of work also, these men follow the life and teaching of Jesus. Like the disciples of Jesus, the Chinese native preachers act also as the preface and foreword to the oracle of the teacher. He sent them out "two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself was about to come." Luke 10:1. They learned their work by doing it with him. Their secret of success was that Jesus had chosen them and ordained them that they should be with him, that he might send them forth to preach; so that they discovered the best methods in direct touch and sympathy with the Master. How much more now under the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit shall the world-wide and heaven-high commission be carried out in its fullest, highest, and broadest sense in the discipling of the nations?

A Chinese Story-Teller

The science and art of mission work lies in its order, adaptation, definiteness and consecration of purpose. The application of this principle is necessary in the mission fields of the Orient as well as in western centers of civilization. It would be about as impossible to lay down an ironclad rule in missions, as to attempt to steer a modern republic by Chinese diplomacy. The spirit of the work creates its own *modus operandi*. Circumstances must always be a determining factor. With few modifications in regard to time, place and circumstances, the native Church has, in regard to its policy and government, elected to follow the precedents of the apostolic church. While along New Testament lines certain rules may be observed and methods adhered to, yet methods must always be plastic enough to be remolded according to the occasion and the need. "Plans that cannot be adapted should not be adopted" has become axiomatic in mission work.

The methods of Gospel story-telling are varied and multiple. Among fishers of men each worker knows best how to adapt and decide his or her own throw, lay and touch on

A Chinese Story-Teller

- the line. Methods help, they cannot ensure success. The decision of the work rests with the worker. But there are many agencies that are peculiar to China in the manner and form of their execution. More particularly is this so in the evangelistic field. In lands hostile to the propagation of the Christian religion, a conciliatory attitude is the first desideratum. A systematic approach to their age-revered and state-sanctioned ideas in religion and social custom is absolutely indispensable.

There are difficulties, dangers, inconveniences and a thousand and one petty annoyances to which the missionary is subjected, and it is often very difficult for the new comer to eat what is put before him without asking questions; but one soon becomes hardened to sleeping on planks or dumping the tired body down on a heap of straw in a corner of a Chinese inn, and in course of time even this becomes a luxury.

It is fortunate that Oriental life and habits sanction outdoor preaching and teaching. There are the street story-teller, the fortune-teller, the traveling theatres, and the public readers of the Sacred Edict. These humorous

A Chinese Story-Teller

and gifted itinerants are all in evidence. It is no doubt a fact that this outdoor exhibition of oratory and display has contributed in no small way to the ease with which large assemblies may be addressed, and in a commendable manner also to the general courteous behavior and good will of the immense crowds who sometimes listen for hours together to the preaching of the Gospel.

One of the best agencies in evangelistic work is that of colportage. Its agents are usually supported by the Bible societies. These Chinese workers travel far and wide selling and disbursing Scripture portions and tracts. They are often called upon to explain and defend the sacred classics. They are usually men who have had some experience with the missionary in the work at home and at the out-stations. Much wisdom and patience are required in this often arduous work. It is the place where one needs to be as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove.

Every worst city will have its best man in it. He is usually to be found without much difficulty, and to have secured him is to have won half the battle of getting a footing. In China

A Chinese Story-Teller

also it often happens that the missionaries "must needs pass through Samaria." Nor should it be forgotten that in many homes there will be open also the hospitality of a Bethany where rest and comfort are given to the weary and footsore worker. Some of the Christian homes in village and hamlet are as little lamps kindled in the darkness, shedding rays of light and truth all around.

There is a considerable amount of "eye-gate work" done in China. This is the pictorial representation of the Gospel. Nearly all the Tract Societies have made a good move in securing native artists (especially those who have become Christians) to exhibit in colored scrolls the stories and parables of the New Testament. The genius of the idea attracts the eye as well as appeals to the imagination and sympathies, and often through these senses also to the convictions. These painted scrolls, maps, pictures and charts very largely assist the native preachers on the streets and help to hold large crowds, exercising a most winsome effect on the audiences. In some places where missions have been long established even the modern stereopticon has been used and the

A Chinese Story-Teller

Gospel told in artistic story with commendable results.

There is perhaps no place where the teacher needs to be so "apt to teach" as on the foreign mission field. It is there that every gift and all graces are put to the severest test. Out of the living volume of his own mature experience as a missionary in Asia the Apostle Paul found time to emphasize the importance of supreme care in the character and deportment of the young missionary. In his letter to Timothy, the veteran apostle urged the cultivation of a sound mind, orderliness, hospitality, temperance, considerateness, ability to "rough it," and commends his "own son in the faith" in that Timothy had closely studied the apostle's teaching, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance, persecution, and sufferings; and then charges this early student volunteer to abide in the things which he has learned and to be faithful to his trust.

In China, as in those first missionary fields of the east, it is the paramount business of the missionary to preach the Word, and to take his or her position in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking and exhorting "with all

A Chinese Story-Teller

long-suffering and doctrine." It is a blessed life! Some writer has called the missionary life "the peerless life." The spirit and character of the work in all the earth is the attestation to this fact. This imperial trust was never endorsed as an easy life; on the other hand it clearly stated and included cost, self-abnegation, hard work and suffering; and in its holy service made these virtues heroic, true, divine; while the patience, power and fitness for such a work are proven to be given in glorious fullness and perennial fruitfulness. We are, as Dr. J. Hudson Taylor says, "a supernatural people, born again by a supernatural birth. We wage a supernatural fight, and are taught by a supernatural teacher, led by a supernatural Captain to assured victory."

It is evident, especially to those who watch the currents of modern missionary activities, that we are living in the "birth-hours of history." The divine immanence is beneath the plan and around the purposes of all great national and international movements. It should not be a matter of surprise to us, therefore, that the awakening and right about turn

A Chinese Story-Teller

of the last and mightiest of heathen empires should cause a universal earth tremor.

Missionaries in China will study the lessons of the times, and in many instances there will be changes in adaptation, adjustment and policy, but there will be no retreat! The Gospel story will be told again and again in those very centers where the sod was drenched with the life-blood of the martyred missionaries and native workers. Even now it is proving to be the sign and seal of their redemption. It would not be true to the history and principles of Christianity for us to forsake its hardest battle-fields, nay, rather is it not true that the costliest fields have proven the worthiest and best? China is worthy of our choicest and richest gifts and offerings. For her proud, haughty, benighted, sin-bound millions the Cross was lifted up. We must echo and re-echo the story of redeeming grace to her remotest bounds. We must win at all costs this central diadem in the Orient and with it adorn and crown the Saviour King of a universal Christian empire.

Oh, that the Church to-day hear the voice of the risen Son of God as he speaks again in regal mandate to her life, education,

A Chinese Story-Teller

wealth, privileges, influence and opportunities, saying:

"All authority, in heaven and on earth, hath been given unto me;

Go ye therefore and disciple all nations,
Immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I myself have commanded you,

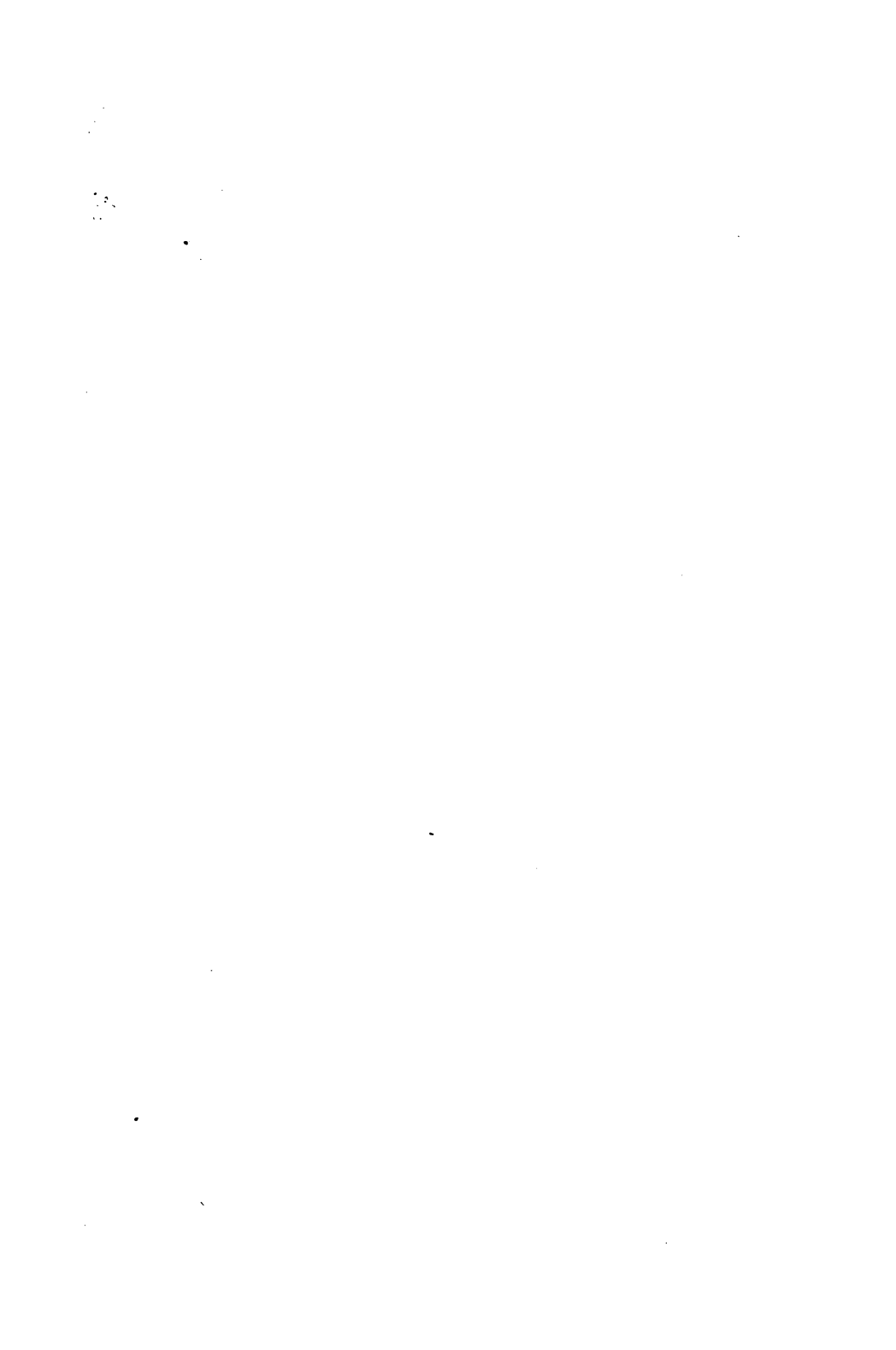
And lo! I am with you all the days unto the conclusion of the age."

That this celestial story and appeal may enlist interest and arouse enthusiasm and lead to a more deep and living co-operation of the home churches with the work in China, and that it may be the means, in God's hands, of calling to China some of the most fitted, consecrated and Spirit-guided youth of our universities, colleges and Bible schools, is the wish and prayer of those who are telling the royalest and sweetest story of them all.

"Is this the time, O Church of Christ! to sound
Retreat? To arm with weapons cheap and blunt
The men and women who have borne the brunt
Of truth's fierce strife and nobly held their ground?
Is this the time to halt, when all around
Horizons lift, new destinies confront,
Stern duties wait our nation, never wont
To play the laggard when God's will was found?

A Chinese Story-Teller

**"No, rather strengthen stakes and lengthen cords,
Enlarge thy plans and gifts, O thou elect!
And to thy kingdom come for such a time;
The earth, with all its fullness, is the Lord's.
Great things attempt for him, great things expect,
Whose love imperial is, whose power sublime."**





3 2044 019 056 548

A FINE IS INCURRED IF THIS BOOK IS
NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON
OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED
BELOW.

